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LOCH ASSYNT.—*Page* 185.

WANDERINGS

BY THE

LOCHS AND STREAMS

OF

ASSYNT;

AND THE

NORTH HIGHLANDS OF SCOTLAND.

BY

J. HICKS, ESQ.

ILLUSTRATED.

LONDON:

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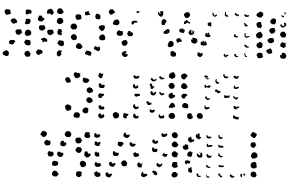

PREFACE.

In offering the following pages to the public, I must beg the reader to bear in mind, that they were not originally intended to appear in print, but were written for the purpose of recalling to my mind, in after years, the scenes through which I had travelled.

Having made several sketches, amongst which were the principal Lochs of Assynt, a district rarely visited, I was induced, by the advice of a friend, to arrange them for the press. I intended making a far longer tour, which I was prevented doing by unforseen circumstances, which I trust may be sufficient apology for the brevity of the work.

While I crave indulgence for the imperfect execution of my sketches, I can assure the reader, that I have endeavoured to preserve accuracy, especially in the delineation of the forms and relative proportions of the mountains and lochs, of which I hope the illustrations are faithful portraits.

For the right orthography of the names of some of the Sutherland Lakes, I cannot vouch, as it is extremely difficult—perhaps I may say impossible, to determine how their Gaelic appellation should be spelt. "Aultnacalgach," which means the "Burn of the Deceiver," is a word which I have never seen correctly spelt in any book in which it is mentioned.

I have described one loch under the appellation of "Madie," being that by which it is known throughout the district, although in maps it generally appears as Loch Vattie. Loch "Bhallan" is pronounced "Vallan," "Bh" in Gaelic answering to the English letter "V."

It is frequently very difficult to arrive at an accurate knowledge of distance in the Highlands, many of the roads having no milestones, or marks of measurement: wherever I have been uncertain as to distance, I have purposely omitted to mention it.

I have given portraits of those Flies, which, after repeated trial, I found to be the most killing in the Lochs of Assynt.

I have endeavoured to give a faithful description of the lochs, omitting a detailed account of those which I have not personally fished, avoiding all exaggeration, by which I might have rendered the work more *attractive*, but less *useful* as a guide to those who may visit the same localities.

If, from a residence of nearly three months in the wild district of Assynt, I have been enabled to afford the reader an idea of the lochs, and other objects of interest, which have hitherto been only mentioned in a very cursory manner, and, at the same time, if I have succeeded in giving to them that interest which is their due, I shall feel amply repaid for the preparation of the following pages.

I trust that others may be induced to visit this most interesting portion of Sutherland, and to offer to the world an abler description than I have given, of the many objects of attraction, which are at present but little known.

ERRATA.

PAGE 55.—Sixth line from bottom, *for* "whiffing" *read* whipping.

PAGE 205.—Eighth line from top, *for* "riddled" *read* ridded.

PAGE 237.—Twelfth line from bottom, *for* "Invernesshire" *read* Invernessshire.

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GRILSE FLIES

LOCH TROUT FLIES

LOCH MULACH CORRIE

LOCH MADIE

THE SINGING SHEPHERD

LOCH ASSYNT

BED IN THE CHEESE ROOM AT CLASHCARNOCH

KITCHEN AT CLASHCARNOCH

LOCH TROUT FLIES.

(DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING.)

FIG. 1.—*Wings*..Turkey feather.
Body...Red worsted, pig's down or mohair, warped with gold twist.
Legs...Red cock's hackle.

FIG. 2.—*Wings*..Grouse or dark turkey feather.
Body...Bright yellow worsted or mohair, warped with silver twist.
Legs...Black cock's hackle.

FIG. 3.—*Wings*..Drake feather.
Body...Dark green worsted, warped with silver twist.
Legs...Black cock's hackle.

FIG. 4.—*Wings*..Grouse or dark turkey.
Body...Orange worsted, warped with gold twist.
Legs...Red cock's hackle.

FIG. 5.—*Wings*..Grouse or dark turkey.
Body...Orange worsted, warped with silver twist.
Legs...Black cock's hackle.

FIG. 6.—*Wings*..Drake feather.
Body...Puce or lilac worsted, warped with silver twist.
Legs...Red cock's hackle (*The best Fly for Loch Ah.*)

FIG. 7.—*Wings*..Dark feather from wing of jay or hen Blackbird
Body...Black worsted or ostrich herl, warped with silver twist
Legs...Black cock's hackle.

FIG. 8.—*Wings*..Light speckled turkey feather.
Body...Purple worsted or mohair, warped with gold twist.
Legs...Black hackle.

FIG. 9.—*Wings*..Light turkey feather.
Body...Bright yellow worsted, warped with silver twist.
Legs...Black hackle.

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WHILE numbers of our countrymen year after year rush to the Continent, there are but few who are acquainted with the beauties of their native land, especially of that more northern portion of it which has long been the property of the Gael. Nature is seen to perfection in the land of the mountain and the flood, while there is scarcely a rock or glen which has not been invested with a double interest as having been the muster place of kilted warriors armed for strife; or, perhaps, the battle field of rival clans who have combated for the honor and renown of their respective chieftains. I had on former occasions visited Scotland, but I had never penetrated into the wild and unexplored region of Sutherland; thither I therefore determined to bend my steps, and for this purpose I proceeded to Glasgow, as offering the easiest and most beautiful route to the west and north highlands.

There are two routes by which to proceed from

Glasgow to Inverary; viz., one, through the Kyles of Bute, (the steamer touching at Rothesay, the capital of the island); the other is to take the steamer to Lochgoilhead, where a coach awaits the arrival of the boat, and conveys passengers across a wild and picturesque country, to Saint Catherine's, on the east side of Loch Fyne, where a small steamer plies several times daily to Inverary. The former of these routes—the one to which I give a decided preference—is performed entirely by water; and, as will be seen by reference to a map, is an immense round, the entire voyage taking above twelve hours; while the latter route is performed in little more than six. But all admirers of fine scenery will be amply repaid for taking the longer course. This I was prevented doing on the present occasion, as the steamers round the Kyles of Bute sail only three times a week, (the Lochgoilhead boats ply on the alternate days), and the day of my departure from Glasgow being one of them, I had no alternative but to go on board, or wait in the smoke and noise of a town for another day, to which I had a strong objection.

The morning was very misty at the time of our departure from the Quay side; we lost, however, but little of interest—the shores of the Clyde being very flat for some distance. The fog cleared away shortly before our arrival at the interesting rock of Dumbarton, surmounted by its castle. This rock has frequently been compared to that of Gibraltar, which it resembles in miniature.

The scenery on Loch Long is wild and magnificent—mountains towering to a great height on either shore, the lower part of which are in many places clothed with thick wood.

At this early season of the year, we were the only passengers for Inverary, and, consequently, had the sole occupancy of a small omnibus and four which we found waiting our arrival at Lochgoil-head. The road ascends and descends by many sharp turns over moorland and amongst mountains, until by a very steep descent you reach Saint Catherine's.

Loch Fyne, equally celebrated for its picturesque beauty and the abundance and superior quality of its herrings, here burst upon our sight—calm as a mirror—reflecting the long chain of mountains which rise on either side of the loch. The day was bright and sunny—a day calculated to raise the spirits, especially amidst such a scene of beauty and of grandeur. What changes had taken place since I was last at Inverary, ten years before! On making enquiry after those whom I had known there, not one remained; several had paid the last debt of nature; one who had promised fairly a few years before, had become recklessly extravagant, and had been compelled to quit his native land and seek a home in America; others had entered the military service of our country, to sojourn for life in India. O, reader! what changes are produced in the short period of ten years; how do our own ideas and feelings change, especially during that period of life which had elapsed between my first and second visit to Inverary—between the age of three-and-twenty and three-and-thirty! Things which pleased me at that time, had now become matters of indifference—things which then almost escaped my notice, now became subjects of interest. One feeling alone, perhaps, continued unchanged, although the keen

edge of the pursuit had become a little blunted. I had from an early age been, I may say passionately, fond of fishing, especially of the fly department; and although, when the shooting season commences, I am always ready to lay aside the rod for a time—especially as then the salmon alone appears to have the same relish for the fly as he had in the earlier part of the season—yet as soon as the treaty of peace is again proclaimed with the feathered race, the capture of the finny tribe becomes an absorbing occupation. It is not difficult to understand the reason that while almost all human pleasures lose their relish in a comparatively short time, those of the sportsman are never voluntarily abandoned. Reader, did you ever meet a man who had once been really fond of rural sports, who either seemed or declared himself to be tired of them? I think not; I never did myself. I have known men of fashion whose only delight appeared to consist in a daily and nightly round of pleasure; I have known men so wedded to a town life, that to vegetate, as they termed it, in the country, appeared to them an insupportable existence; I have known such men tiring of their amusements, and making a change in their mode of life, diametrically opposite; but I never knew the taste for rural sports pall upon the palate of the sportsman. The riddle is soon unravelled. While the enjoyments of towns must be sought either in a crowded ball-room, an overheated theatre, or the gassy and unwholesome air of a billiard-room, the pleasures of the chase are pursued under the open canopy of heaven—in pure air—in invigorating exercise, which, instead of destroying the constitution, and thus draining the

very powers of enjoyment, strengthens at once both mind and body; and the repetition of the pursuit tends only to render the eye and hand more practised for the well directed fowling-piece, or deception of the silvery salmon or the spotted trout.

Inverary is much frequented by strangers during the summer, but the weather was too cold and ungenial at this season of the year to set tourists in motion. We had, therefore, a choice of lodgings; we soon made our selection, and our kind and attentive host and hostess made us most comfortable during our stay of a week. The landlord (observing that part of my luggage consisted of a gun-case) informed me, that if I purposed staying at Inverary, I could have some shooting gratuitously: the game consisting of roes, hares, rabbits, snipes, woodcocks, and black game. This was a strong temptation to stay; at the same time shooting black game in April appeared to me a curious and novel practice. I found, however, that the Duke of Argyll wished the roe deer and black game destroyed as vermin, on account of the injury they were inflicting upon the young trees. In the last two or three years, since this war of extermination had commenced, between three and four hundred roes had paid the penalty of their attacks upon the woods. The keeper was very glad of the assistance of fire-arms, when beating the covers; and were I at this instant, while I am writing, at Inverary, I doubt not but that I should have some excellent sport, as I was told I might have three or four days' shooting every week. On the following day, the head keeper, with the greatest civility, drove up to our lodgings in a

dog-cart, and conveyed myself and two other gunners to the scene of action, which was about two and a half miles from Inverary, at the end of Loch Fyne. I did not raise my anticipations high, as I was cautioned not to expect much sport. As this day we were going to the worst part of the ground for game; and it was more than likely that not a single roe would be in the cover. Four men who joined us on the ground were sent up to the moor to drive any outlying roe into cover: while myself and the keeper and another gun took up our positions in advance in different passes. We soon heard a distant shot, which, after a short interval of time, was followed by the challenge of the dog, which was evidently approaching us, giving tongue, however, as if going in an upward direction. After this I heard the keeper give notice of a fine buck having gone to the top of the cover. By this time the four men, who had made the circuit in our rear, had beaten up to us and we proceeded in line. A number of black game winged their way over my head, offering several single shots; but being all grey hens my gun remained undischarged. Just as we were coming to the end of the cover, a shot was fired in the upper part of it, and a very fine buck fell a prize to a young man who had never killed a roe before. He was as proud and happy as if he had conquered a besieging enemy. When we left the cover, after skirting the loch side, we again took up our positions in passes.

I waited eagerly hoping that some roes might rush past me, but we were doomed to see no more roes that day, and to return home with the single buck. A woodcock came swinging by me as I

stood in the pass. I could not resist, and I stopped his headlong flight, and whistled him down with a slug in his wing. On our way home we bagged another woodcock, two hares, and a few rabbits, which formed the sum total of the spoils of three hours' shooting.

The next day we walked to Inverary Castle, the seat of the Duke of Argyll, which stands in a beautiful park close to the town. The castle itself has little pretensions to beauty. It is a square formal building; the architecture partly that of a castle with modern Gothic windows, and partly that of an ordinary dwelling house. The interior, however, well repays a visit. Not to mention several other objects of interest, all admirers of tapestry will be gratified with the most beautiful specimens, fresh and vivid in colour as if completed yesterday, while the designs are exquisite. We saw the interior of the castle to advantage, everything being in readiness for the reception of the Duke and Duchess, who arrived on the following Wednesday, to the delight of all the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, by whom they are both deservedly respected, from their kindness and charity to the poor, and the urbanity of their manners. On leaving the castle, we ascended the hill of Dunniquoich, on the summit of which is a square tower, erected some years ago by a party of engineers. From this point the eye commands a very beautiful and extensive view. The town of Inverary beneath forms an interesting feature in the landscape. To the right of the town lies the castle, and its romantic park—Loch Fyne lying stretched in all its beauty before the spectator—while on every

side, mountain after mountain rises to the farthest point of vision. The ascent of this hill is steep in some places, and the sun being very hot, and my companion not being of the most robust frame, nor so much used to exercise as myself, we stopped occasionally for a rest; and filling my pipe, which is my companion in all my rambles, I sat down to enjoy the soothing narcotic, in as fair a scene, and on as fine a day as man could wish for. We just entered the tower on the top of the hill, but quickly withdrew from so cold a place. It has a roof, a door on one side, and a square open window on each of the three remaining sides, through which the wind howls and whistles, keen enough to freeze one on the hottest day. I visited this tower years ago in the height of summer, and I have a vivid recollection of the chilling blast which was rendered still more so by the heat caused by the ascent. We descended Dunniquoich by a more circuitous, but decidedly easier path; it is in fact a carriage road, while that by which we had ascended was a narrow footpath. Before returning to our lodgings, we called upon the Duke's head keeper, a very superior man, and extremely civil and obliging in giving every information as to the fishing and shooting in the neighbourhood, which may be free, or over which permission can be obtained from the Duke. After partaking of a glass of excellent whiskey qualified with water, fresh from a neighbouring spring, which (I mean, of course, the whiskey), was pressed upon us both with true Highland hospitality, we arranged to fish, on the following day, some lakes at about ten miles from Inverary, called the Muir Lochs: there are a a number of them together, one above another,

and scattered over the high range of moorland in all directions.

Ten years ago, while staying at Inverary, being informed that the fishing of these lochs was perfectly free, I rose one morning at two o'clock, and soon afterwards, accompanied by a friend (a brother Cantab), started on foot for the scene of action. We pursued the road for eight miles, when we struck on to the moor, and continued to ascend for about a mile and a half, when we found ourselves beside one of these lochs of small dimensions—called, I believe, Loch Laken. I soon put my tackle together, and commenced the gentle art. I was immediately rewarded by a couple of trout—three times that number I believe being disappointed of the same feathered delicacy, as was indicated by the turmoil in the water. This was a good omen, which was confirmed by the capture of one, two, or three, at almost every cast. The loch, almost unruffled by a breeze, was in constant commotion near my flies—ring upon ring indicating the number and greediness of the fish. This delightful amusement, and these unfailing casts, were soon terminated by the arrival of a man, with a gun and a brace of setters, who immediately asked me by whose permission I had come to trespass upon the haunts of these lively tenants of the water. I told him that I had been informed that the lochs were all free. He begged to assure me in return, that they were all protected by the Duke, (the present Duke's father), and that I could not continue to ply my craft in that neighbourhood; but that if I chose, I might go about three miles further over the moor, where I should find some other lochs, belonging to a gentleman named Malcolm,

which were unpreserved. I hailed my friend and off we started; nor were we disappointed or unrewarded for our labour. The trout in these lochs were not so numerous, but larger than those in Loch Laken; and while there was a curl on the water they rose keenly: a calm, however, in a short time succeeded, and "Othello's occupation was gone" for this day. I forget at this time the number of the fish we took. I did not then as I do now record the number and weight of what I kill; but as well as I can remember, my own rod killed seventeen or eighteen dozen, and although many were very small—the largest being about three quarters of a pound—still by the time we reached Inverary, at half-past nine at night, we were tired of our burden, although we had eased ourselves of a part of it at some cottages which we passed.

CHAPTER II.

The Muir Lochs—Departure from Inverary—Loch Awe—North Port Sonachon—Decrease of Small Trout in the Loch—Pike and Perch—Advantages of Loch and River Fishing compared—Death of a Gentleman at the Inn—Departure for Oban—Scenery on the Road—Arrival at Oban—Situation of the Town—Dunolly Castle—Dunstaffnage Castle—Island of Kerrera—Isle of Mull—The Mill Loch—Ravages by Flood—Loch Nell—Baillie of Delfour—His aversion to innovations in religious matters—Burn dammed back—Sea Trout—Heron Island.

It was with a pleasing remembrance of my former success, that I looked forward with sanguine expectations to some good sport on the following day; but I was doomed to be disappointed. According to the arrangements made the previous day, the keeper arrived at our lodgings at ten o'clock in the morning, and drove us up in the dog-cart to a cottage eight miles distant from Inverary. Here we left the horse, which had brought us over at a spanking trot, and putting our creels, which we might have dispensed with, upon our backs, we began to ascend the moor; and in three quarters of an hour we reached the same loch from which I had been discharged by the late Duke's keeper, ten years before, but under very different circumstances: then the fish rose keenly, and I was prohibited from taking them; now, in company of the head keeper, I had full permission to fish, but not a trout would rise to honour my privilege.

Had I not assured myself, by former experiment, of the abundance of fish in the lochs, I should have

doubted their existence altogether. Our bad success to-day, I attribute wholly to the earliness of the season, and the coldness of the weather. When we reached the lochs, we found their sides margined with a crust of ice; the sun was extremely bright, while the air continued frosty throughout the day; and the lochs were extremely low, owing to the long drought which had completely dried up a spring of good water, which the keeper told me he had never seen dry before. Four rods continued to persevere for as many hours, without rising a trout; and, finding all in vain, we returned to the cottage, and having harnessed our black cob, had an agreeable drive to Inverary, the road being very picturesque, with the Douglas Water on one side, and a wood of magnificent firs on the other.

It was with a feeling of reluctance that we left the sweet little capital of Argyllshire, and came by a private car, engaged from the Argyll Arms, to North Port Sonachon, on Loch Awe. A coach runs between Inverary and Oban during the summer months, but it had not yet commenced.

The sight of this beautiful loch revived many pleasing associations of the past. I went back in imagination ten years; and for a short time I could fancy myself possessed of the same buoyant spirits, and freshness of enjoyment, which novelty then afforded. The loch remained in appearance unaltered: there were the numerous islands, amongst which I had enjoyed such excellent sport —killing from eight to ten dozen trout, in a few hours, and occasionally varying the amusement by the capture of some ravenous pike. There stood the mountains, which had bid defiance to storm and tempest: Ben Cruachan—from the summit of

which may be seen the bleaching fields of Ireland—towering in majestic grandeur above his fellows.

Having got our luggage stowed into the ferry-boat, we crossed to North Port Sonachon, where I hoped once more to see the kind and worthy landlord, Cameron, with whom I had staid six weeks on a former occasion. Time, however, had wrought its change here also. The poor man, I believe, from too great liberality, (not a vice with which innkeepers are often chargeable), had failed—lost his wife—was married again; and was now a waiter at an hotel in Glasgow. The inn is now in the hands of a Mr. Marshall, a civil landlord, whom I found to be a brother freemason.

The loch, although unaltered as to the appearance of its surface, would, I believe, present a change by no means for the better, could we descend into its depths and take a peep at its inhabitants. We should still, in all probability, see a crowd of salmon, and salmo-ferox, as well as numerous specimens of fine yellow trout; but we should find a fearful depopulation of those sweet and lively finsters, up to half a pound in weight, who used to rise at almost every cast, in defiance of our own physiognomy, and that of the boatman; and required only a good stiff curl to set them dancing and hooking themselves on the surface of every wave. Reader, would you know the cause of this change? Pike, which were formerly unknown here, had settled themselves in certain bays (which they found, from their weedy nature, well suited to their requirements) to which they gained access from a piece of water, into which a gentleman had placed them—never thinking of the probability of their reaching the loch. When I

was here before, these fresh-water tyrants were confined almost to one end of the loch, especially the Chapel Bay, where one afternoon I captured five of them (with an artificial glass parr), weighing thirty-four pounds. But now, alas! being content no longer to remain in their own territory, they have sallied forth and obtruded themselves into every society; and, together with the perch, which here attain a vast size, have enriched themselves by ruining and killing the less hungry tribe of trout.

Although the day was remarkably bright, there being not a cloud visible, I determined to make a trial of the loch. I launched the crazy boat, lying near the inn, and cast my flies over some good fishing ground. I had, however, but two rises, and succeeded in capturing one trout, weighing nearly a pound and a quarter. This fish was in capital condition, cut very pink, and was of excellent flavour. Half an hour sufficed me, for making fruitless attempts, to rise fish in a dead calm. I landed on an island, ate my luncheon, enjoyed a soothing pipe, paddled about in the boat, baled out the water, of which she had taken a copious draught; in short, did all I could to pass the time (as is generally the case with all anglers during some part of the day) while waiting for a breeze; which is indispensably necessary to success. My principal objection to loch fishing, is the uncertainty how long a breeze may last, or whether one may find one-self becalmed almost immediately after one's commencement. Like all other questions, there is much to be said, *pro* and *con*, as to the relative advantages of loch and river fishing. In the former, we have seldom reason to complain

of want of water, nor of its being too much discoloured, as is frequently the case in rivers, at which time the worm becomes the only attractive lure; and after the turbid water subsides, the fish are sluggish, being flood-fed and overgorged with worms and grubs.

On the other hand, in river fishing, provided the water be not too discoloured, the practised angler will seldom fail of success, while the loch may lie motionless, unruffled by a breeze. If a curl spring up, he will of course turn his chief attention to the pools, as yielding the largest fish; if the wind subside altogether, he has still the streams to afford him sport in defiance of the calm.

In river fishing, therefore, we are chiefly dependant upon water; in loch fishing, upon wind. I certainly, on the whole, prefer river fishing myself, especially where the lochs are of such a nature that they cannot be fished by wading; for while a boat, in every instance, will ensure far better sport —in short a loch cannot be properly fished without one—the pleasure is much increased when on "*terra firma.*"

While upon the loch waiting for a breeze, which, on this occasion, never came, I was informed that an English gentleman had died of cholera a short time before at the inn at which we were staying. This was certainly not very pleasing intelligence, and my companion voted for an immediate departure. For my own part I had some doubt as to whether the cholera were infectious; and if it were so, I felt that we must already have imbibed the infection, and, in fact, that it was too late to escape. On making further inquiry, I found that a gentleman and his son had been

staying at another house in the neighbourhood, a short time before, upon a fishing excursion, where they had suffered from the shameful infliction of a damp bed. The elder gentleman caught a severe cold, and with the addition of many other symptoms of fever, &c., came to North Port Sonachon. The son, under much apprehension, applied to a young inexperienced medical practitioner, who happened to be staying in the neighbourhood, who administered a draught to procure sleep, from which the patient never awoke—the sleep of death! What a sad termination to a fishing tour, in which both the father and son had enjoyed good sport! The latter in deep distress now returned to England taking with him the deceased to be deposited in his final earthly resting-place. My companion was still most anxious to quit this house, which had thus become invested with gloom; but no horse could be procured this evening, so that we were compelled to postpone our departure until the following day. After breakfast we started in a car for Oban, which we reached at five o'clock in the evening. The scenery through which we passed is extremely beautiful; a portion of it I think I have not seen surpassed in Scotland. Near Taynuilt the road continues at a great height while the river flows at an immense depth below—now murmuring gently in its shallows—now rushing white with foam amongst opposing rocks—now lying black in some deep rocky basin as it pursues its course through wood on either bank. The side of the road in several places is unprotected by any railing; and were the horses less acquainted with such roads, the near approach to these precipices would be a service of danger. The road, in point

of bottom and material, is like the roads throughout Scotland—smooth and excellent. Ben Cruachan is seen to great advantage at Taynuilt, rearing his double summit above the surrounding mountains. On reaching Oban, we went to the King's Arms Hotel, kept by Mrs. Sinclair, who is assisted by her son. This is not considered the first house in the town, not being equal in size to the Caledonian, but it is replete with every comfort, and nothing can exceed the civility and kindness of the landlady, nor the attention and quickness of the servants.

The situation of Oban is extremely romantic. The town which contains several hotels, and many good houses and shops, lies in a beautiful bay sheltered on the east by a high cliff which is crowned with wood and verdure. About a mile to the north-west of Oban, on a rocky promontory, stands the old castle of Dunolly, the property of Captain M'Dougal, chieftain of the clan; about two miles and a half beyond which, at Connel Ferry, the mouth of Loch Etive, is Dunstaffnage Castle, belonging to Sir Angus Campbell. Opposite the town, at a distance of about half a mile, is the Island of Kerrera, behind which, at a distance of twelve miles, rise the mountains of the Isle of Mull. A magnificent chain of mountains stretches away also on the northern shore of Loch Etive.

After two days we left the King's Arms and succeeded in obtaining some very clean and comfortable lodgings, kept by a most civil and obliging person of the name of Mathewson.

Although there is no fly-fishing of any note in the neighbourhood of Oban (yet being unadvoidably detained until I should receive a remittance

from my banker) I determined to walk up to a loch, which, I was informed, contained some trout, and where a little sport might be had occasionally. I only heard of this loch by accident, while I was out making a few sketches; and the day being very bright, and unfavourable for fishing, I did not think it worth while to return for my rod. I enquired at a house, about a mile from Oban, in which direction I must proceed. I was immediately invited into the house, where I was received with great civility by Mrs. Campbell and her daughter, and in a few minutes I was introduced to Mr. C., who kindly offered to be my guide to the loch, which lay at a distance of more than a mile over a wild moor at the back of the house. My attention was soon attracted to what Mr. C. informed me were the effects of a very sudden and violent flood, caused by a water-spout, during the previous winter. In several places the ground had been rent asunder, leaving vast clefts and hollows, as if caused by an earthquake, or some great convulsion of nature. In the immediate neighbourhood of Oban two bridges had been carried away; the roads for the period of an hour were impassable; the flood rising and subsiding in the space of about five or six hours. On arriving at my destination—the Mill Loch—we found it very low, from the long drought which had prevailed in all parts of Scotland. The day was extremely hot; and after our walk over the moor, under a very bright sun, I was glad to sit down; and, while making a sketch of the loch, which I never visited again, to quench my thirst with the coolest water I could get from a small burn: counteracting the danger of taking it while much heated, by a dash of mountain dew from my

pocket-flask. Mr. Campbell whiled away the time in agreeable conversation, while I continued my hasty sketch. From my own observations, and from what I could collect from others, I did not feel very anxious to try my skill upon this loch with the rod, although in the winter or autumn I should gladly have returned to it with my gun, as I believe there is very fair wild fowl shooting here. I saw one or two large flights of ducks and a couple of wild geese.

Next day, at about eleven o'clock, I started to Loch Nell, three miles and a half distant, with Baillie of Delfour—in Inverness-shire—to whom I had been recommended to apply for any information I might require respecting the fishing in the neighbourhood of Oban. Baillie is an old and experienced angler, and is allowed to be the best fisherman in Oban. I soon judged that he was a veteran in the art, on making an inspection of his flies, which, although not numerous, were home-dressed, and far better adapted to their purpose than the more highly finished shop productions. His fly-book was of a cheap and primitive kind, consisting of a few pieces of newspaper stitched together—a piece of shoe-leather forming the cover. This, together with an old rod, and a couple of creels, were locked up in a hair trunk, together with some clothes of a very antediluvian appearance. Baillie was a man evidently much averse to changes and innovations. On leaving his house, we soon passed the Free Church: rather a pretty edifice of stone, which has recently sprung up since the disruption, and stands beautifully situated on an eminence overlooking the bay. Soon afterwards, we passed the Established Church of Scotland, of which

Baillie continued a staunch member. I was much pleased and amused at the plain and unanswerable nature of his reasoning upon the subject. "I belong," said Baillie, "to the Established Church, because I was brought up in its mode of worship from my cradle; and I can see no difference whatever between it and the Free Church, except as regards the mode of paying the ministers, which is of little concern to me, or my welfare. I should like to know very much," said the honest fellow, "whether all the sects, with their quarrels and useless wranglings, will ever get a new bible —a new rule of life—a new Saviour—or a new mode of obtaining heaven?" Having delivered himself of this plain argument, he sat down for a few minutes, and taking out the primitive fly-book, "No, Sir," said he, "we will leave others to their religious squabbles, while we fish on in the old way;" and then the words, "That's it, Sir," announced to me that one fly on his cast line had been substituted for another, the body of which he thought better suited to so bright a day. After pursuing our way for some distance along the road, we struck across a high moor, and descended to Loch Nell, which lay beneath us almost becalmed. A long Gaelic conversation now took place between some farm labourers and Baillie, who interpreted to me one part of the information he had received, which was by no means gratifying to an angler. Out of the loch, at the end which we were now approaching, flows a small river, or rather burn, which, having a short run into the sea, affords a convenient passage for sea trout. I believe, sometimes, good sport may be had in the burn itself. The water had now been stopped by the farmer

who had dammed it back close to its junction with the loch. This burn, upon which Baillie had calculated for sport, existed only as a gravel bed, over which trickled a small quantity of water which escaped the dam: by the side of which we seated ourselves, and proceeded to put our tackle together. The sun was very bright; scarcely a breath of wind fanned the loch, or wafted away the smoke of Baillie's black clay, which came ready charged from his waistcoat pocket, together with the necessary accompaniments of knife, flint, and home-made touch-paper—articles carried by almost every Highlander. We commenced our operations on a deep pool above the dam, where Baillie informed me he had occasionally killed salmon. Nothing rose here to-day except one tolerable sized trout, which refused to rise a second time. We continued to fish round the shore, which I considered to be the "pursuit of fish under difficulties," as for several yards from the edge the water is so shallow that the greatest prize to be expected is the capture of a small parr. Baillie, however, being an old man, and the day being anything but promising for sport, contented himself with fruitless casts from shore, rather than risk the rheumatism by immersing his old limbs in a cold bath at so early a period of the season. A few casts more, and I could stand it no longer, so in I walked for some distance; and when many yards from shore, I stood but knee deep in the water, which was extremely cold — the sun, at present, not having sufficient power to subdue the effects of the morning frosts. Once over the first shock, one cares but little about it—exercise and excitement keeping one warm. I had now caught three or four trout, while Baillie not having a rise,

began to appreciate my wading. Still the number and size of my captures were not sufficient to tempt him off *terra firma*. Presently, coming round amongst some rocks—where wading was quite as necessary, but not so easy—I hooked a lively finster, whose facetious gambols on the surface, together with his silvery brightness, pronounced to be a sea trout. I had scarcely landed my fish, when splash! splash! causing me to look round, I beheld the old angler, unheeding the "rheumatics," flogging away with renewed vigour, up to his middle in water. Having taken one sea trout, I felt rather sanguine upon the capture of a second; but it was now Baillie's turn to meet the reward of his wading. I had just extracted the fly from the mouth of my fish, when within a few yards of my previous cast, the old angler's fly was seized by one of the same species, which had risen to the surface to learn the cause of his companion's absence. We had now proved that a few sea trout had worked their way into the loch, in defiance of the farmers' barricade. My trout, rather under a pound in weight, and Baillie's a trifle over, together with twelve yellow trout, which I afterwards caught, and two taken by the old angler of Delfour, completed our day's sport. In this loch, near the upper end, is a small island, with a few old trees upon it, which is a celebrated breeding place for herons. As we passed it in the afternoon, a number were winging their heavy flight backwards and forwards, while the branches of the trees were covered with nests, and many birds seated on the branches were uttering their wild screams, according well with the solitary scene. Wild ducks, with their out-

stretched necks, were passing to and fro in their wedge form, while an occasional splash attracted our attention to the spot, where fish, which would not feed, were sporting themselves on the calm surface of the lake.

CHAPTER III.

The Ring Loch—Difficult Capture of a Trout—Walk to Dunstaffnage Castle—Fisherman's Cottage—Departure from Oban—Captain Ross, of Rossie—Arrival at Banavie—Departure—Ben Nevis—Invergarry Inn—River Garry—Disappointment—Donald—Loch Garry—Trout very inferior to those taken in Loch Oich.

BAILLIE, having again finished a somewhat pithy argument in favour of religious toleration, declared himself ready to conduct me to a small loch, which abounded with trout, but in which he would undertake to say that I should not be able to capture one. I confess that I had a great desire to visit so singular a piece of water. At the same time, I immediately guessed that the lake to which he alluded was either so overgrown with weed, or surrounded by rushes, as, if not to prevent the rising, at all events to obstruct the landing of a fish. After a tolerably steep ascent for a short time, from Loch Nell, we proceeded by an easy walk over moor to the lake, which is well named the "Ring Loch," being quite circular; and, from what I observed upon its surface, I should say that it is literally full of trout. Ring upon ring—plash upon plash—to say nothing of the numerous dorsal fins which appeared above the water—plainly indicated the number of fish contained, as well as the security offered, by this lock. The high rushes which run out for many yards from shore, (the interstices of which are blocked up with floating weeds, except here and there where a few

inches of unencumbered water appear) almost preclude the possibility of throwing a fly. I could not, however, resist making an attempt. To throw a short line was quite out of the question, as the flies would inevitably fall high and dry upon the reeds; to get beyond which, and to reach the few inches of unencumbered water (to which I have alluded), required a long cast, which, in all probability, would rise a fish; but then came the question—how to land him? The only chance of success, under such inauspicious circumstances, was never to allow the fly to sink, nor the line to touch the water or low weeds; to keep the rod so elevated, and to make such frequent casts, that the fly might barely touch the surface ere it was again withdrawn. This course I adopted, and, on the first cast, I hooked one trout out of half a dozen which made a simultaneous rush at the same feathered dainty (hare's ear body and pheasant wing); but now came the difficulty. Although my fish was well hooked, how was I to extricate him from the weeds into which, according to custom, he rushed, hiding his head in the soft mossy weed, at the same time leaving an impenetrable phalanx of rushes between himself and his captor. Here I stood in a most helpless condition, my rod well raised and bent nearly double, the butt towards my adversary, who was still shaking himself in his soft bed, and doing his utmost to entangle my flies, which was only prevented by keeping a tight line upon him. All movement now ceased; nothing could I feel but a heavy dead weight, which promised to strain the top of my rod, the fish having (as I supposed), quietly taken his departure, leaving my fly safely lodged in the weed. To stand all

night in this position would be a tedious amusement; to lower my rod was the surest means of losing the fish, if he had not already returned to his anxious relatives; while anything like main force endangered both rod and line. My only plan, in this critical juncture, was to run out several yards of line from the reel, in order to release my rod from its crippled position; and then, contrary to all rule and good management, to take the line in my hand and pull it steadily on the chance of the weed giving way, the loss of a few lengths of gut, and a cast of flies being but a trifling misfortune compared to the fracture, or permanent injury, of my rod. I gave one or two gentle jerks, which enabled me to bring ashore a great mass of weed, which so completely covered my flies as to prevent any danger of catching the rushes. Somewhat to my astonishment, I found that this mass of weed not only contained my flies, but my fish, who was so completely encased in it that all his exertions to escape were paralyzed, which accounted for the cessation of all motion, and which had led me to conclude that he had escaped. Nothing but the great thickness of the weed had prevented his departure. I had now secured one fish out of this curious loch—an exploit which old Baillie considered next to impossible to perform. I felt no inclination to make a second cast. I saw some very fine trout leaping in this loch, which, if partially cleared of its weeds, would afford excellent sport; but, at present, it is tantalizing to see so unavailable a piece of water, and it is most annoying to attempt to fish it. The only way in which I can conceive it possible, to get some fair sport in this water, would be to paddle about in

some small boat—a Welsh corracle, or very small canoe—using a short line and only one fly. Were the weeds sufficiently cleared away, I have no doubt a single rod might kill a cart-load.

We now returned to Oban, and a more gorgeous sunset I never beheld than that now reflected in the bay beneath us. The mountains of Mull appeared like transparent copper. The Island of Kerrera formed a more sombre feature in the foreground; while several vessels were lying in a perfect calm, the sea for a short time appearing like liquid fire. Too magnificent, too gorgeous to last long, the sun sunk behind the Island of Mull, and the calm evening grey succeeded.

Three miles distant from Oban is Dunstaffnage Castle, an interesting ruin belonging to Sir Angus Campbell. In the immediate vicinity of the castle is a very old chapel, now roofless, in which are deposited the remains of many of the Scottish kings. Sea fishing forms the principal occupation of the peasantry, in the neighbourhood of Dunstaffnage. On my way back from visiting the venerable castle, the day being very hot, I entered a small cottage by the road side, to crave a draught of cold water, which I immediately obtained—together with a sight of the most interesting peasant girl, I think, I ever beheld. Three persons occupied the cottage at the time of my entry: the mother, the widow of a deceased fisherman, was busily engaged with the primitive bellows of her lungs, in kindling the peat, to boil the kettle for tea; a son who was hastening to his last earthly resting-place, under the insiduous attacks of consumption, was seated on a table, perusing a Gaelic bible; while his sister, a girl of about nineteen year of age, was busily

engaged in preparing baits for her two younger brothers who were then out fishing. Each of these three persons had their peculiar interest attached to them: the mother, whose spare form and weather-beaten features, bespoke activity and exposure to hardships, fitting her for the fisherman's wife, had no time to break down under the trial of a declining child; her poverty forbade her giving up her mind so much to grief, as to unfit her for the service of her family, in the preparation of their meals, or the sale of the fish which her sons might bring home. The son, whom I saw reading his bible, had the air of a man who felt that he had but little time to sojourn upon earth, and was content and happy to employ his remaining days in preparing himself for another world. Sometimes he would read aloud a portion of scripture to his sister, as she sat upon a low stool, extracting the muscles from their shells with a quickness and dexterity which practise could alone produce. It is seldom that one meets with anything like a realization of those interesting peasants described in novels and romances; and it is but seldom that we see that innocence of countenance which our artists have so frequently depicted as belonging to rustic maidens. Here, however, was a model both of face and form, which would have served as a study for a Hebe or a Vestal. There was an openness of countenance, and a calm steady gaze in her beautiful eye, which bespoke virtue in the strongest terms; and there was modesty in every word and gesture; nor was there any of that affected bashfulness which generally cloaks a lack of that which is real. When she offered me a chair, first carefully dusting it, it was done with an air of natural

politeness which is far more winning than that to be derived from the most scrupulous attention to the rules of Lord Chesterfield, which, perhaps, in more instances than one, have produced the vice without the polish. Our cottage heroine was rather tall than otherwise, of erect carriage, and possessing just a sufficient "*embonpoint.*" Her countenance had the innocence of a child, while the beautiful roundness of her form proved the full development of the woman. It was interesting to observe the ease with which she changed from a Gaelic conversation with her mother, to an equal fluency of English with myself; and that English devoid, at once, of all Scotch accent, or of the various disagreeable dialects of English counties, or the bad grammar, or unaspirated H, so common amongst the lower orders of cockneys. Highlanders generally speak the purest English; and this girl was certainly the most efficient I have met with, even amongst Highlanders.

On the following day, being Sunday, I went to the Established Church. There is an Episcopalian service performed during the summer months for the benefit of the many English people who then visit Oban, but it was too early in the season to avail myself of it. It may also be as well to acquaint some of my readers that mass is performed here once a month by a priest residing in the Isle of Mull.

After a fortnight's sojourn at Oban, we embarked from the pier on board a steamer proceeding from Glasgow to Inverness. The large boats which ply upon this station during the summer months had not yet commenced. The steamer in which we embarked was much crowded, principally

by the lower orders; those travelling for pleasure having not yet commenced their wanderings in the north. These vessels are necessarily small to enable them—in coming from Glasgow—to pass through the Crinan Canal, which is very narrow. There were several passengers, amongst whom was Sir Angus Campbell, the owner of Dunstaffnage, together with their luggage, to land at Oban; this, added to the heavy freight of goods which we took on board, detained us for upwards of half an hour, heaving up and down the pier side. Having received all our goods and passengers on board, the ropes which secured us to the pier were slackened, and the paddles were soon in motion; while we beheld the sweet little town of Oban rapidly receding from us, and in a short time we were passing the interesting castle of Dunolly, perched on its rocky promontory. The weather, which had quite broken up since the last gorgeous sunset, only forty-eight hours previous, was most unfavorable for the enjoyment of scenery. We were ploughing through a tolerable swell; a heavy Scotch mist was falling, accompanied by a cold wind, which promised soon to convert the shower into that of snow or sleet, which latter more unpleasant form it soon assumed. Having passed an island or two, we could see nothing more than the boiling surf as it was thrown from the paddles, and the dense mist which surrounded us on all sides. Many sought shelter in the cabin, which, however, was so small, and already well filled, that I preferred the fresh air upon deck; so I folded myself in my plaid (which useful garment, if made of good material and properly put on, will turn a great amount of wet), and sat resigned. The mist

still continued obdurate until we reached Fort-William, when it cleared away in a slight degree. I had, however, now to a certain extent, become independent of external objects, in the interesting anecdotes and pleasing information of a gentleman, with whom I was conversing upon the subject of fishing and shooting. I soon perceived that he was a thoroughly experienced sportsman by the remarks which he made relative to the breeding and preservation of salmon and grouse, and the formation of deer forests. All this agreeable information was given in reply to any questions I might ask, but wholly unattended with those forced, and frequently exaggerated, accounts of personal success, which better become the tyro than the experienced veteran. I shall never forget the kind and courteous manner in which this gentleman undertook to give me some written instructions for my guidance in that part of Scotland which it was my intention to visit. This promise was soon performed, for, in about half an hour, upon going down to the cabin, I received some most useful memoranda which I still possess, and prize as bearing the signature of the first rifle shot in Britain, perhaps, one might say, in Europe. This most successful deer-stalker combines the character of a most perfect sportsman with that of a man of high education and accomplishments, which renders his society so agreeable, and his conversation so instructive. To say more were needless, as the various accomplishments to which I have alluded, as well as the urbanity of his manners, can only be appreciated by those who have been fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of the writer of the memoranda to which I have

alluded. The extraordinary feats performed with every variety of rifle, and the numerous successful exploits in the forest, on the moor, and in the flood, are well known in the sporting world, in which few could be found who, by report at any rate, are not acquainted with the celebrated Captain Ross, of Rossie, whose signature for the first time informed me to whom I was indebted for so much kindness shown to a perfect stranger.

At seven o'clock in the evening we reached Banavie, having landed at about half a mile from this excellent new inn. The steamer, which is detained some time in passing a lock—the first on the Caledonian canal—came up in about an hour afterwards, and lay all night opposite the inn, ready for her departure to Inverness on the following morning. I was not aware, till afterwards, that passengers may—and I was informed by the captain, frequently do—remain on board the vessel all night, where they have good accommodation, instead of going to the hotel, which is, however, a very good house, fitted up at considerable expense, and affording every comfort. We betook ourselves to bed at about eleven o'clock; and on the following morning, at half-past five, having hastily swallowed our single cup of coffee—which I thought rather an expensive draught at one shilling each—we hurried down to the steamer, and were once more proceeding towards Inverness. There is a fine view of Ben Nevis * from Banavie inn, from which it takes about six hours to ascend to the summit and return. The ascent should not be undertaken without a guide. I made a rough outline

* This mountain, long supposed to be the highest in Scotland, is 4,373 feet in height, while Ben Macdhui, one of the Grampian range in the south west of Aberdeenshire, is 4,390 feet high.

of the magnificent mountain as we passed along in the steamer. My original intention was to proceed direct to Inverness, but this I was induced to abandon at the advice of Captain Ross, to whose judgment, in sporting matters, I should ever be but too willing to defer. The rivers, in all parts of Scotland, were now extremely low, many of them almost dry, in consequence of the continued drought. I was told by the innkeeper at Banavie, that they had only had one shower in the last fourteen weeks, a thing almost unprecedented in the Highlands. Captain Ross very kindly invited me to fish the river Carron, in Ross-shire, on which he resides; but he, at the same time, told me that it was utterly useless to pay it a visit until after a *fresh*, as there were no lochs to feed it, and, consequently, the angler is entirely dependant upon rain; after which, there is frequently a good run of grilses, and excellent sport may be obtained. I hoped, from the broken appearance of the weather, that the day was near at hand when I might try my skill upon this water; but in the mean time I wished, if possible, to exercise the gentle art in any water where even a few trout might be tempted to the surface. Under these circumstances, he had advised me to land at Kirlochy, and to proceed to Invergarry, where there is a very comfortable inn kept by a Mr. M'Donald; and to try my luck in the river Garry, where—although the salmon fishing was preserved by Lord Ward, who has purchased the estate of Glengarry, chieftain of the M'Donel's—he had little doubt that I might capture the more ignoble trout, or attempt to do so, without interference or restriction. Accordingly I landed at

Kirlochy, and having all my heavy baggage with portmanteau and gun-case, which were well taken care of, I strapped my knapsack on my back, and with my trout rod in my hand I walked three miles and a half to Invergarry inn. I proceeded southwards, by the bank of the canal, for about half a mile; then crossing a handsome suspension bridge, I pursued an excellent road, skirting the side of Loch Oich, through which I had previously been conveyed by the steamer; and, after pausing for a short time, to admire the lovely scenery, I struck off from the loch side, following the course of the Garry until I reached the inn, which is situated close to the road on the river side.

The day was beautiful—rather too much so for fishing. The inn was clean, comfortable, and inviting; the rooms were spacious; the piano was rather out of tune; the landlady was well looking, frank, and civil; and in the absence of her husband—who, by the bye, is a glorious remaining instance of a man attached to his clan, and in appearance as well as heart, a thorough Highlander—gave me all the information she could about the fishing in the neighbourhood; at the same time telling me that she could soon send me a lad who knew "all about it." The first part of her information was not particularly welcome, viz., that no person was allowed to cast a line in the river which flowed not fifty yards from the house. Farewell to all my hopes of making a good creel that evening; the river was certainly very low—but, then, such a river! I had cast an angler's eye on the numberless deep pools which no drought could effect—where trout must lie—and, though half starved, must rise at anything that I might

offer them. Oh, reader, if you know the haunts of trout, you should have been there to behold them, or rather you should *not* have been there to suffer my disappointment! In a fit of despair I ordered my dinner, preparatory to which I quenched my thirst with a glass of ale, and made a sketch from the window of the river which I could not fish. My sketch completed, I took out my fly-book, ready for the inspection of the "lad" whom I begged might be sent for at this fearful crisis of disappointment. In a few minutes the "lad" arrived. Bear in mind, reader, that in Scotland, and the north of England, every male is a lad up to forty years of age, and more. The same rule is observed with the fair sex, who are all denominated girls—I believe to any age—if they be unmarried. The lad in question was about four and twenty years of age. Donald had the eye of a man who could discern a stag, or a fish, when you or I might say it was "all barren." His countenance won my confidence in an instant—open, intelligent, and happy. His form was slight, but athletic. His height, about the medium, qualified him for activity, which I afterwards found he possessed to a wonderful degree; he had won the prize for running on several occasions; and won our coble on the following day when it was a race between himself and the wind. Donald doffed his *real* Glengarry bonnet, and proceeded, at my request, to look at my book. "Aye, Sir," said he, "you have flies would fish the world," and turning over the leaves, "stop a wee," said he, "that should kill," then a couple of leaves turned over without remark, showed that the insects represented did not meet his approbation. I now closed

my book, asking Donald, at the same time, where he thought I had better try on the influence of that which should kill. "Indeed, Sir," was his answer, "we might take a few small things this evening in Loch Garry." I confess I am not very fond *of small things*—at the same time the evening was too fine to be spent within doors—and a walk of three miles and back, to try one's luck, was an object at any rate. The walk is a very lovely one, thickly wooded on either side the road; the black game abounding to a great extent; and roe deer gracing the sylvan scene, repaid me for the labour of healthy exercise. When we reached the loch the boat was not at its accustomed place; but Donald, with the eye of an eagle, discerned her on the shore at a considerable distance, and, with the fleetness of a stag, reached her, baled her of several gallons of water, and, with the skill of an experienced rower, soon brought her down to me. I had killed three or four trout from shore during his absence, and after half an hour's fishing in the boat, I caught eight more "small things." Here, I should remark, for the benefit of those who may visit this district, that the trout in Loch Garry are not only "*small* things," but *soft and dirty things*, scarcely worth the trouble of *catching*, and *certainly* not worth the trouble of *eating*. I must, however, state at the same time, that I believe from what I have heard, that in this loch are some magnificent specimens of the "salmo-ferox" to be taken by trolling. Nothing of any size, I was informed, is ever to be taken with fly; and even the small ones are white when cut, soft, and of indifferent flavour. This is a singular circumstance, or rather it would appear to be so to those

who have not turned their attention to the change produced upon fish by a difference of feeding ground, which can alone be the cause of the remarkable difference between the condition of trout caught in Loch Garry, and those taken in Loch Oich—these two lochs being connected by the river Garry which has a run between them of only four miles. In Loch Garry a good trout is scarcely ever caught; while those taken in Loch Oich are invariably well conditioned and of good flavour. I had left directions for my salmon rod, which was undergoing some repair, to be forwarded to Inverness. Having, therefore, only my single-handed rod with me—for I never use any other for trout fishing—I could not attempt to troll for the great lake trout this evening.

CHAPTER IV.

Loch Oich—Trolling—Tremendous Squalls—Loss of Heavy Fish—An Old Peninsular Officer—Second Expedition to Loch Oich—Invergarry Castle burnt after Battle of Culloden—Loch Garry—More Squalls—Loch Garry, first Lake, how formed—Tormandown—Gordon Cumming—Eagle's Eggs—The Inn—Fishing in Upper Garry.

On the following day Mrs. M'Donald supplied me with a strong rod and reel, and a set of trolling hooks, the property of a Captain Ross, who resides chiefly at the inn. Thus equipped, and accompanied by my friend Donald, I proceeded to Loch Oich, a mile distant from the inn. This loch, in addition to the great lake trout, contains plenty of salmon and pike, besides small trout, which, however, are by no means keen after the fly. Donald told me that the capture of half a dozen was considered good sport; but that they would average, in all probability, three quarters of a pound a piece. The day was any thing but propitious, and every minute it became less so. We had not to complain of a bright sun, or of a want of breeze; on the contrary, it was a dark, lowering day, and the wind was blowing a hurricane. The wind can scarcely be too strong for trolling, provided it blow steadily from one quarter. To-day, however, it veered about, coming in tremendous gusts from all points of the compass, and frequently coming in two opposite directions at the same instant. We embarked in a small coble, belonging to Mr. M'Donald, who also owns the boat on Loch Garry;

and while "my man Friday" was straining every sinew in endeavouring to keep her against the wind, I was employed in the stern in letting out the line: compelled, however, to lean well forward, to prevent my being blown over-board, as I sat perched on the narrow edge. In a few minutes the Inverness steamer passed us, and her swell set us dancing up and down; while the fitful gusts of wind frequently sent our little coble round and round like a peg-top. This was anything but an agreeable kind of fishing; still I determined to persevere in the hope of being rewarded by a salmon. Every five minutes I was obliged to direct Donald how to pull to keep her head to the wind, as I saw the black scuds coming rapidly up, the loch boiling with white foam, and the spray dashing over us and keeping us pleasantly moist.

Donald, who had been accustomed to row on Loch Oich for fourteen years, told me he never saw such a tempestuous day. Having trolled along the north side of the loch, we crossed over; but were still unsuccessful. We now went ashore and took our luncheon; and by getting into a kind of cavern, we were enabled to enjoy a smoke, which was quite impracticable upon the water. There was some appearance of the gale subsiding; but in a few seconds came a gust which set our boat adrift. Donald, however, espied her departure just in time, and although at some distance from the loch side, his active limbs, long trained to the race, enabled him to stop her before he was knee-deep in the water.

We now embarked again. In about five minutes I felt a tug, which cheered me a little, but I was disappointed, and Donald disgusted, when I

extracted a pike of two pounds from his watery element. This small fresh-water tyrant lay safely at the bottom of the boat gasping and opening his malign-looking jaws for some time, notwithstanding two good thumps on the back of the head which he received from Donald, to remind him of his impertinence in seizing the bait intended for the nobler salmon; or at least, if of his own species, for one arrived at maturity, and not so juvenile a specimen as himself. The most merciful way of killing a pike is to put a knife blade into the spine just below the head, as the only means of instantly killing a fish so tenacious of life.

Another bait being put on the hooks, away we went again, struggling through the foaming loch, when another tug announced the arrival of a trout of rather more than a pound in weight, which proved, the same evening, to be in excellent condition and of first rate quality. This sweet finster had scarcely been deposited in the boat, which Donald was again endeavouring as he best could to keep against the wind, when a sudden squall capsized him to the bottom of the coble, where he lay for a few seconds, keeping the oars, however, firmly in his hands; he soon righted himself again, and pulled away, laughing at his mishap.

Now came a tug which there was no mistaking for anything but that of a very heavy fish; and the mode of fighting which he adopted, left little reason to doubt that a good salmon was hooked. For about a quarter of an hour the most pleasing excitement was kept up. When a good sized fish is hooked in a boat, it is desirable to land, if possible, and kill him ashore. This we could not do

immediately, for he was no sooner hooked than away he went helter-skelter, leaving Donald to follow him as fast as he could, against tremendous squalls; notwithstanding whose utmost exertions against the wind, we were still consciously going in an opposite direction. The wind would have gained the day against any two men.

Our friend had now stopped in his mad career, and permitted himself to be gently towed after us, which is by no means uncommon, when a salmon, hooked from a boat, has cut his first capers. We had feared from the commencement that our trolling hooks were far too small for loch fishing. Two of them now proved faithless, into the bargain, and thus within a few yards of shore, where I anticipated an animated "kill," my fish took his departure, leaving the line and trolling hooks to come sneaking back, as if ashamed of themselves.

We tried over the same ground we had fished on starting in the morning; but, the hurricane still increasing, we found it impossible to manage our coble any longer, or even to keep the rod in a proper position; so coming ashore with our small spoils, we walked up to the inn, where I found my companion in a great state of nervous excitement, thinking that we should not continue fishing on such a stormy and tempestuous day, and, consequently, that we had gone to the bottom of Loch Oich to make acquaintance with its inhabitants.

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good." Captain Ross, being particularly fond of pike (a fish which I care nothing about myself), I was enabled to give him a delicacy, as a slight remuneration for the use of his rod and trolling tackle. After making a hearty dinner, for which

the day's hurricane had given me a keen appetite, I sent my compliments to the captain, begging him to come and take a glass of toddy, and spent a most agreeable evening with this old Peninsular officer, who had held a commission in one of the Highland regiments, of which I forget the number, and had seen much service, having been twice wounded in Waterloo, and in other engagements. Having been a good deal abroad, his anecdotes were very entertaining and acceptable over a cheerful fire, the comfort of which was enhanced by the unfriendly blasts to which I had been exposed during the day.

On the following day I again embarked in the coble with Donald, Captain Ross, and my companion. Captain Ross very kindly offered me the use of his rod, but I could not trespass so much upon his kindness as to accept it, while he sat a spectator. This day was a repetition of yesterday —I think, if possible, rather worse. After half an hour's tossing, whirling, and exposure to wind and surf, my companion and myself came ashore, and, for a short time, watched the coble bravely riding upon the billows of this little inland sea. During our stay Captain Ross caught a trout similar to that which I had taken the day previous. Waving an adieu to the persevering angler, we proceeded to the ruin of Invergarry Castle, which stands on an eminence overlooking Loch Oich. This castle was the stronghold of Glengarry, chieftain of the M'Donel clan. At the Rebellion of '45, as the English term it—the Rising, as it is designated by the Scotch—Glengarry himself was absent; but his brother led on the clan, in aid of the cause of Prince Charles,

against the English under the Duke of Cumberland. After the defeat of the Pretender, at the battle of Culloden, this castle was burned by the English; but the Government would have rebuilt it for Glengarry, some years ago, had not a portion of the building been removed by him, in consideration of the chieftain himself not having personally headed the clan in the battle. Having returned to the Invergarry inn, I took a hasty luncheon, and was on the point of setting off to fish a small mountain loch; but Captain Ross finding all attempts to fish on Loch Oich useless, on account of the tempest, returned to the inn; and Donald advising an attempt to troll on Loch Garry, we set off, accompanied by an indefatigable angler, a Mr. Mitchell, who had just arrived from Fort-William. Loch Garry being much more sheltered than Loch Oich, we hoped to find it calmer; but we were doomed again to encounter the same severe tempest. Donald and Mr. Mitchell went to fetch the boat, while I remained at the head of the loch putting my tackle together. This completed, I captured a few small trout from shore before their return, which they made by a rather circuitous course, having two rods out from the stern, trolling for the salmo-ferox. I stepped into the craft when she neared the shore, a far larger boat than that upon Loch Oich, but not nearly so water-tight. Mr. Mitchell and myself tried fly-fishing, as well as we could, with the trolling lines still out. We soon found it utterly impossible to cast a line, the gusts of wind taking it kept it aloft, and then whirled it round over our heads, fixing the hooks either in some part of each other's person or clothing, and frequently putting our lines in a

tangle, requiring the exercise of more than human patience to unravel. Fly-fishing was very soon abandoned by us both; but the equally unsuccessful trolling lines were permitted to spin a couple of baits, in their unnatural antics, through the stormy lake, till we arrived at the other end of it. Here there is an island when the water is high, but it was at this time a promontory, owing to the extremely low state of the loch. We fished a river, but without success, which connects this first loch with a second, supposed to have been the only one originally; but some portion of the banks of the river Garry having given way, the first loch was formed. The two lakes are called Loch Garry; for although separated when the water is low, they together form one beautiful lake when the water is at an average height. The second loch is by far the best for trolling, being five miles in length, and very deep. Up to this period I had certainly been signally unsuccessful in my piscatory excursions—but let not the angler, who may visit the localities which I have hitherto described, despair—let him bear in mind that I was particularly unfortunate in having a remarkably dry season to contend with; and, that during the short time I was engaged in fruitless attempts on Loch Oich and Loch Garry, the tempest was such as to bid defiance to the angler; indeed, during the whole period through which I have hitherto carried the reader, I believe nothing was done by the disciples of Isaac Walton. In the lochy, one of the best salmon and grilse rivers in Scotland, Lord Yarborough, who rents the water, together with three other gentlemen, had only killed one or two salmon. My object is not to exaggerate

or to invent, but to tell the truth. The same waters which sent me home with almost an empty creel may at another season reward an angler with a burden that he may be glad to distribute by the road side, rather than weary himself with its carriage. On my return again to Invergarry, I was recommended by Captain Ross to try the *upper* Garry, which obtains the prefix of *upper*, at the farther end of the second loch, which I have already described. Accordingly, on the following day, I started with my companion and Donald for a small inn, called Tormandown, a distance of ten miles, which we performed in a dog cart, drawn by an excellent horse, in little more than an hour. The road skirts the side of Loch Garry through most beautiful Highland scenery; but the road, though in itself most excellent, has so many ups and downs, and frequently such sharp turns on the very brink of a precipice, that no one would drive at full trot, except a Jehu like our own, who knew the road both by night and day, and could place implicit confidence in his sure-footed beast. It would be impossible to conceive a wilder district than that in which Tormandown is situated—surrounded on all sides by mountains, which extends as far as the eye can reach. We have here left the beautiful woodland scenery which clothes the banks of the Garry, and continues on the road side to the end of the loch. Here, all is moss and heather. The lower parts of the mountains are clothed with heath, which abounds with grouse; while the upper parts are almost wholly composed of naked rock, the summits being generally capped with snow, where the ptarmigan breeds in great abundance. In no part of Scotland have I seen so much game,

of every description, besides a variety of wi birds. The eagle, however, which was a fe years ago, common in this district, has now b come comparatively a "*rara avis.*" The celebrat African hunter, Gordon Cumming, had been sta ing at this inn of Tormandown, for a week, f the purpose of obtaining some eagle's eggs, two which he had succeeded in taking by means o being lowered over the face of a mountain, about two miles distant, by means of a strong rope fastened round his body. When he has reached the nest, he takes out the eggs in a spoon which he has fastened to a stick. I was informed that he appeared quite to enjoy this hazardous occupation, as he swung like a bird below. I much regret that I had not the pleasure of meeting this renowned and venturous sportsman, especially as I was informed that, together with his experience and utter contempt of danger, he combines a remarkable gentleness and kindness of disposition; and that he is very willing to impart any information in his power without regard to the rank or grade of the inquirer. He has, I believe, been condemned by some, for associating too promiscuously with those beneath himself in rank; but his accusers should remember that a line of conduct which would be degrading in a populous town, becomes quite excusable (and unavoidable in his hazardous exploits) in an almost uninhabited country: where a man must either, to a certain extent, associate with his inferiors, or wander about amongst the wild animals of the creation, without exchanging a word with his fellow man. It would be scarcely possible to accept the services of inferiors in directing him to the eagle's or

raven's nest; to be lowered by them over a rock; to trust his life to their care; and immediately on reaching "*terra firma*," to go home to an inn, and spend the evening *alone*, excluding those, who had assisted him, from his society. While in towns, and populous places, distinctions of rank are always so scrupulously observed, and necessarily so, to prevent the impertinent intrusion and impudence of a vulgar upstart, in a thinly populated or almost uninhabited district, we are compelled to associate with much greater freedom, with those beneath us in *rank*, but perhaps our superiors in *virtue* and *integrity*. We need lose nothing of our own respectability, while we shall certainly rise in the estimation of those with whom we are not too proud to converse. What a different person is a Duke at Almack's, in Hyde Park, or St. James's, to what he is when a resident on his own estate. In London, there is an immeasurable distance preserved between himself and one of the lower orders; while in the country, he will sit down and converse with the humblest peasant, and willingly accept a piece of oaten cake and a glass of milk to refresh him during a day's shooting. Look at royalty itself! Our Sovereign, when at Court, must observe all the nice points of distinction which become her high station; but when relieved from these irksome restraints, and again welcomed back to the Highlands, we know how she has honored the dwellings of the poor, and has freely conversed with its inmates.

I am personally unacquainted with Gordon Cumming; but in those districts, which I have visited, he has left behind him the character of

being strictly honorable in all pecuniary transactions, and in the observance of truth. A gentleman said much in his favour when he told me that however marvellous some of his exploits might appear, whatever was penned or asserted by him might be relied upon as true.

I trust the African hunter may never fall a sacrifice to his perilous adventures—at the same time some of his exploits, where no object whatever could be obtained, I think would have been better unperformed. One of this kind was the leap off Invergarry bridge into the flooded river beneath—at a great risk of his life—which feat, I was told by an eye witness, was performed because it had been previously achieved by another man. It would be a pity that a man, of such undoubted nerve and courage, should fall a sacrifice to a rash or reckless undertaking.

At this place, as well as at Invergarry, I was treading on the track of the lion hunter, but I was never fortunate enough to meet him. On the present occasion he had gone, on the previous day, to St. Kilda in pursuit of wild birds' eggs.

The inn at Tormandown, although coming under the denomination of a small house, affords very comfortable accommodation for a sportsman; indeed, I was quite surprized at meeting with some articles of luxury and civilization which I had not expected to find in so wild and retired a spot. In the sitting-room, which was nicely papered, there was an easy chair and a couch; while in my bedroom (where was a most clean and comfortable four-post bed, which I knew was well aired, as the lion hunter had only quitted it the same day), there was a very large and excellent looking glass,

a tin bath—a luxury which one seldom meets with in the first hotels; besides many other articles which few would expect to find in so wild and remote a district—in a solitary house, far removed from any other dwelling. The inn is situated on the direct road to Loch Hourn Head, near which the scenery is so magnificently wild and almost terrible, that I was assured it would repay one for a long journey to proceed to the extreme point of the road which terminates at Loch Hourn. The road itself is an extremely good one; indeed it surprised me, especially when I was informed that there was but one house between Tormandown and Loch Hourn Head, which is only a point from which to proceed in a boat to the Isle of Skye. This road was made by Glengarry for his convenience in proceeding to his property, the Isle of Skye.

Having made a slight repast, in the way of luncheon, or rather an early dinner, I sallied forth again with Donald at two o'clock to try my luck in the Upper Garry. There was an excellent curl on the water, but the wind came from the east, and the afternoon was intensely cold. We walked about a mile and a half on the Loch Hourn Head road, turned down to the river, and fished our way back to the inn. Donald did not commence operations until I had taken a small trout, for which he did not wait many minutes, which was immediately put on to a set of trolling hooks, and went spinning through the water for a considerable time without success. None of the large trout (there are some of great weight in this river) would seize the lure; but at last a fish of little more than half a pound was tempted by the dead

parr's most unnatural gyrations. This was the only trout that gave Donald the chance of a capture, and he was speedily deposited in the creel. I killed a score of small trout with fly, and finding them rise very badly we returned to the inn where Mrs. Munro, in the absence of her husband, did everything in her power to render us comfortable.

CHAPTER V.

Sunday at Tormandòwn—Pipe extinguished and re-lighted—Good Pool—Pipe re-kindled—Trolling unsuccessful—Description of Upper Garry River—"The little Fish" and the big one—Living in the District—Return to Invergarry Inn—Abundance of Game in the neighbourhood of Tormandown—Proximity to the Isle of Skye.

NEXT day, after being my own private chaplain, I walked out for a short distance on the Skye road. Tormandown is situated at a great distance from any place of worship, except a very small chapel which has been erected close to the inn by Mr. Ellis, to whom an extensive tract of shooting belongs. Service is only performed in this chapel occasionally, as I was informed by Mrs. Munro, once in six or eight weeks, sometimes once in six months.

On the following morning I started up the glen in the direction of Loch Hourn Head, accompanied by Donald, and also Mr. Mitchell, who came over from Invergarry in order to fish the Upper Garry. We walked to the shepherd's cottage, a distance of five miles, where we commenced fishing. The day was extremely bright, the sun scorching, the wind, which came from the east, was very cold. This river, which is formed by nature for trout, is, in its upper portion, of a very rocky character; its course being in many places confined in a very narrow channel. Here it rushes, white with foam, through a narrow gorge; a few yards further, it reposes in a rocky basin; from which again it

urges its headlong course in the form of a water-fall. Before proceeding further I should mention one trifling incident, which, although unimportant in itself, may serve to give a hint to a brother angler to provide against the same inconvenience to which we were exposed. Without entering into the merits or demerits of smoking, I must simply state that Mr. Mitchell and myself, as well as Donald, are addicted to the enjoyment of tobacco; and a great comfort and companion it is during a day's fishing. On this occasion Mr. Mitchell had left his pipe behind him at the inn; Donald had broken his well blackened clay on the previous Saturday; and while I possessed both an entire pipe and tobacco—my last fusee had been used—and our only means of getting a light would be by the use of a flint in Donald's pocket, which, however, was such a bad one, that, after about twenty minutes' exertion, it failed to ignite the touch paper, although in the course of the day, under half an hour's indefatigable labour on the part of its owner, it afforded one light, the only one which it seemed to possess. The shepherd being informed of our necessity despatched a lad to us with a huge piece of burning peat, which set us going like three steam engines. *Mem.*: let all smokers lay in a good supply of fusees, and practice the strictest economy in sparing them, when a light may be obtained by any other means. A fusee is a most difficult article to meet with when rambling through the Highlands; indeed in many small towns they are not to be met with, while in villages it is vain to seek them. It is a good plan when the supply is running short to cut each fusee into two.

Having caught a couple of trout I came to a kind of fall, at the bottom of which was a most tempting black pool, into which three or four streams were curdling their way around the rocks, giving that smooth appearance to the water, which a friend of mine describes as the "castor oil." This pool is about sixty yards below the shepherd's house. It is difficult to fish it properly, as the angler labours under the great disadvantage of throwing from a considerable height. I availed myself of a large rock, half way down the fall, which slants back from the pool, and whose face, though very smooth and steep, presents one or two shelves or ledges, which afforded me a tolerable footing. By this means I was enabled to land my fish with far greater ease than I otherwise could have done, although in raising them up the fall of four or five feet I lost several, one or two of which were of very tolerable size. In this pool, which is not more than twenty yards in circumference, I caught ten trout in about a quarter of an hour, and rose twice as many more. The brightness of the sun, the extreme lowness and clearness of the water, together with the easterly wind, would be sufficient to account for the fish being somewhat shy. They were by no means backward in rising, but in hooking themselves; sometimes they would rise short three or four times consecutively. I saw quite enough of this water to-day to convince me that it is as full of fish as any one could wish a river to be; and had it not been for the long-continued drought, and the extremely bright sun, I doubt not but my cargo of trout would have been infinitely more than I could have carried home: under all circumstances,

however, I had no cause to complain; my creel containing, on my return to the inn, quite as much as any fair fisherman would wish to kill in one day.

The course of the river, a little below the pool, which I have lately described, is performed, for some little distance, over a broader and less obstructed channel; consequently, the water was so low that I spent but little time over it, knowing that I could only rise a few small trout or parr. About a hundred yards lower down I came to a piece of water which was perfectly irresistible. It was only to be reached by wading, for which I was amply repaid. The main course of the river was here too shallow and uninviting to tempt me; I accordingly made my way across to a small sandy island, behind which was a tolerably deep stream running back in a contrary direction to the river into a large pool which had been formed by the long drought. Before narrating my success, I would remark, for the benefit of any tyro who may peruse my tour, that in fishing a river, this sort of stream running into a pool is the spot of all others to be carefully fished. The eddy, which forms the back current, to which I have alluded, stops flies and a variety of insects in their onward course, whirling them round and round while they are at the same time approaching the pool, which is the sure resort of a multitude of fish; and it is in such situations that the attentive observer will find the greatest number of insects are seized by their watchful enemy. To see this in perfection, let any one conceal himself as much as possible, and if the water be low and clear he will observe numbers of trout lying with their heads up stream,

wriggling their tails backwards and forwards, thus keeping themselves almost stationary, anxiously awaiting the arrival of some fresh victim who, having been just whirled round in the eddy with sufficient force to carry him for an instant under water, comes on with the stream an easy prey to this spotted devourer, who sucks him down ere he has time to recover from his *dishabille*. Proceeding upon such experience I commenced with this stream, or backwater, which was not above six feet wide and about three times as much in length ere it merged into the quiet pool. The first cast up came a fine yellow trout of about half a pound weight, whom I landed as soon as possible in order to keep the water undisturbed. This done, another cast landed a couple of somewhat smaller finsters. As soon as I came to the corner where the stream joined the pool, about half a dozen leaped at once at my flies, two of whom received a gentle tap of the head, and soon lay beside their relatives in my creel. The wind, which had lulled, now revived, and a slight cloud coming over the sun at the same instant, I had nothing to do but to throw my fly and hook one or two, at almost every cast, out of two or three times the number who appeared equally solicitous to gorge the hook. I lost no time in filling my pipe, which I should have done had I the means of obtaining a light; but looking up the river I descried Mr. Mitchell, at about sixty yards distance, whiffing away apparently without much profit. I hailed him to come and share my success, while I continued to wreak my vengeance on the natives while the breeze lasted. Mr. Mitchell soon joined me, and tried the art with those whom I had left unprovided with a dry

and comfortable resting place. The fish did not rise, however, as well to him as they had done to myself, although he was an expert piscator. I was, therefore, confident that he had not the right fly, especially as almost all my captures had been made upon one favourite fly —now the worse for wear. Body—peacock's herl; legs—red cock's hackle; wing—from the pheasant's tail. I had a few remaining in my book, and I gave him one, which proved equally successful in his hands. We fished this small pool for about half an hour more; and, in the same space of time, I never saw the angler's trade better rewarded. I do not exactly know what Mr. M. caught here, the number was somewhere about twenty-five. Before leaving the spot two of Lord Ward's gamekeepers arrived, and having availed myself of a light from them—which I returned in the form of a dram of whiskey—I turned out the contents of my creel, and found that I had taken thirty-nine trout from this pool, which now became calm, and the excitement ceased. We sat down for about twenty minutes, during which time Donald arrived, amazed at our success, having toiled away with his heavy rod and trolling tackle without getting a single run. He vowed that he would never exercise the same branch of the art again in a river. We continued our recreation until six o'clock, having commenced at half-past one. We fished the water very carefully; and I can say, for my own part, that when there was a chance I did not throw it away by hurrying over my ground; I fished every likely place, inch by inch. On reaching our inn again I had exactly seventy-one trout, weighing seventeen pounds. Mr. Mitchell had a weight of ten

pounds and a half. The extent of water we fished was about one mile and a half, which short space, coupled with the extreme lowness of the river—to say nothing of the earliness of the season for this district—may serve to show how plentiful the trout are in this sweet and picturesque stream. I was assured that a few days after a slight fresh, later in the season, I should have taken twice the number of trout, and a salmon or two—of which there were none at present in the water—to boot. From the nature of the water and its remote position, where the foot of the tourist seldom treads, I can readily believe that this computation might be far exceeded.

For some distance the river pursues its course chiefly through a narrow channel, being in many places rather difficult to fish, owing to the steep and slippery rocks which must be passed to reach some excellent pools. Two miles from the shepherd's house the rocks assume their most formidable shape, as if summoning all their might to prevent the further progress of the river, which having overcome this barrier, changes its character entirely —no longer rushing through a narrow channel, it now reposes its vast bulk in a large expanse, calm and dignified, as a giant after victory.

When we reached this point we found the expanse of water I have named ruffled by a slight breeze, and we killed several trout—as many more rising short. Had we reached this part of the water earlier in the day, I doubt not that we should have killed heavier fish than those we captured in the streams; indeed, had there been a breeze in the morning we should not have proceeded above the still water. A little below this spot the river,

continuing a silent course through grass clad banks, forms a small lake of considerable depth and width, requiring a boat to fish it; and again it suddenly makes a fall, and flows by a rocky and narrow channel for about a hundred and fifty, or two hundred yards, when it again expands itself, and for a considerable distance forms a deep and dead water—affording excellent fishing, provided there be a good strong curl, without which it is useless to make a cast. The next morning I proceeded with Donald in a dog cart, which was kindly offered us by Mrs. Munro, as my companion—who also went with us—felt little inclined to make an excursion on foot to the shepherd's house, at which we yesterday commenced our fishing.

We were detained in the morning for some time at Tormandown, and it was past three o'clock before we commenced our operations. The wind was westerly, and the day not quite so bright as the preceding, which induced Donald and myself to anticipate equal, if not better, success. We were however disappointed; the fish were not equally keen, and two dozen were all that my basket contained when we left the water, a short distance above the point to which we had proceeded yesterday. Occasional reverses only tend to stimulate the angler to renewed exertions to which we arose on the morrow, but reversed our movements. During the forenoon it rained heavily, and there was but little breeze during the whole day. What little wind there was we availed ourselves of in the still water, immediately below the inn, where we commenced at one o'clock and fished up the river, terminating our labours at a little before eight in the evening. I had one piece of entertainment

to-day that diverted Donald extremely. I hooked a trout of a quarter of a pound on the bob, when another of heavier weight seized the tail fly—a scene almost as exciting as the capture of a salmon —far more so in Donald's opinion, ensued. The young gentleman above performed a few merry capers, which aroused the indignation of my friend below, who would not deign to show himself, but hung for a few seconds like a dead weight, from which I judged that he was firmly hooked, as experience afterwards testified. In a few seconds away went the line—my reel whirring round like lightning. "That's a good fish," said Donald, "he fights like a young bull," and indeed I must say I have never killed either trout or salmon that shewed better pluck. I was obliged to let my line run again and again, as he repeated his indignant rushes towards some favourite hiding-place. The diversion, however, consisted in the persevering obstinacy of the "little fish" assuming a right to go in his own direction, while the more aged below was determined to pursue his course towards a different point of the compass. After the old gentleman had completed his course I immediately wound up my line, which I kept so tight upon him as to raise the juvenile high and dry above the water. I heartily wished the youngster would liberate himself altogether, and return to his friends to recount the amusement I was having with his grandfather. I tried all I could to get rid of him, but in vain. Whenever he hung suspended, he assumed the appearance of a lifeless fish. Donald and myself thought him a corpse. In another instant away went the old one; and the young finster, finding himself

once more restored to his native element, resumed his playful diversions. "Why, sir," said Donald, "the little fellow has no chance, except when the big one takes him under water;" and so it was, and so did the little fellow continue to struggle in opposition to his heavier antagonist, till I landed them both in an exhausted state, and ending their dispute by a gentle tap on the head deposited them in my creel. The young gentleman, as I have already stated, weighed a quarter of a pound, while his heavier antagonist sent my pocket steelyard up to two pounds and a half, which, added to the rest of my captures, sent me home with five dozen more of their species, weighing ten pounds and a half.

Next day it poured with rain until four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time it abated sufficiently to induce me to turn out with Donald, in order to catch a few trout for dinner—which frequently depends in this wild region upon the success of the angler's rod. Eggs, milk, butter, and oatmeal cake, are to be had in plenty, and are all of excellent quality. There is also an abundant supply of mountain dew to replenish the angler's flask, or to make a glass of toddy to warm him after his day's wading. The nearest butcher lives at Fort Augustus, a distance of several miles, and there being no public conveyance of any kind, the sportsman must not expect a very frequent arrival of meat. The day was very unpropitious for the practice of the gentle art, and after fishing three streams in which I took a dozen trout, of tolerable dimensions, I returned to our comfortable quarters; and having divested myself of my moist habiliments I sat down to what is called a tea meal, and, with the assistance of my companion, discussed some of the

contents of my creel, leaving a few for breakfast.

Next day we again sallied forth, commencing immediately below the inn, at twelve o'clock, and terminating at three. There was a high wind coming from the east; the fish were rising badly, and having killed three dozen I returned for the last time this season to the inn of Tormandown. Having taken luncheon we started in a car supplied by Mrs. Munro, and after an hour and a half's drive in a cutting easterly wind we once more reached the Invergarry inn. Before closing my account of Tormandown I must state that I never beheld anything equal to the abundance of game in this district. I have travelled over the wildest portions of the Highlands, but this part of the country literally swarms with the feathered tribe to an extent surpassing any other through which I have passed.

Daily, in my piscatorial rambles, I saw roes feeding amongst the rushes beside the river, while the frequent fresh footprints of the red deer bespoke their abundance. Every night and morning they come down to drink, and swim the river in pursuit of some favourite pasture. Grouse were rising at almost every step; ducks, mallard, teal, and widgeon, were perpetually flying backwards and forwards, while the golden plover whistled in every direction; and numbers of curlews, approaching unusually near as if to ascertain my employment, lent their mournful cry to the wild harmony of birds. It is interesting to see the old black cocks winging their way every evening to some fighting ground, in order to contend for the favours of the grey hens. I have seen from forty to fifty

old blacks engaged in one pitched battle in a small piece of stubble in front of the inn, close by the roadside. They frequently kill each other in these fierce and chivalrous encounters.

The eagle, as I have already stated, has become comparatively scarce in this quarter; but one animal is still more rare, and that is man. The *genus homo* seldom presents himself in the form either of the male or female sex. During the time I was at Tormandown I saw one man who brought us the burning peat from the shepherd's house, and one little barefooted boy in a kilt who answered my questions in Gaelic, of which language he "had plenty," as the term is, but not a syllable of English. I much regretted being unable to go from this place to the Isle of Skye. I felt much inclined to proceed thither from this point, but, on further consideration, I abandoned the journey, knowing that letters of importance would be awaiting my arrival at Inverness. I was surprised to find myself so near the island. There is a good road branching off from that to Loch Hourn Head, at the back of the inn. The distance is only thirty miles to the ferry, which is not half a mile in width to the island. On my return, however, to Invergarry, I was assured that it was too early in the season for a visit to the island, and that the month of June or July was far better suited to the expedition. I consoled myself, therefore, with the hope of visiting the isle at a later period, which hope, however, from unforeseen occurrences, has hitherto, like many others, remained unrealized. Reader, if you contemplate a tour to the Highlands, let me assure

you that although you may "travel further," and possibly "fare worse," you will see nothing wilder or more truly Highland than Tormandown.

CHAPTER VI.

Departure from Invergarry—Caledonian Canal—Loch Lochy—Loch Oich—Loch Ness—Inverness—Mr. Snowie—Washing of Linen—Unwholesome Water—Continued Drought—Culloden Moor—Battle of Culloden—Clava Chapels—Return to Inverness—Clachnaherry—Departure for Beauly—Falls of Kilmorack—"The Drhuim"—"Eilan Aigas."

We took our departure from Invergarry inn. Mr. M'Donald drove us down to Kirlochy, where—having got our luggage together, which had been carefully deposited in a place of safety since we left it—we soon saw the steamer approaching us, and in a few minutes more we were proceeding towards the Highland capital.

The whole course of the Caledonian canal lies through some of the most beautiful scenery in Scotland. Leaving Banavie the steamer proceeds for some distance through an artificial canal, of sufficient width for a fair sized steamer, the depth of water varying from sixteen to twenty feet. Presently we arrived at a lock, which being passed, after about a quarter of an hour's detention, we immediately entered the beautiful Loch Lochy, a lake of considerable depth and width, and ten miles long; after leaving which, in a short time, we entered* Loch Oich—in width half a mile, in

* As we were about to leave the lock, after quitting Loch Lochy, one of the crew of our steamer fell overboard. Fortunately the gates of the lock were not yet opened, in which case he must have been drowned as the water was nineteen feet in depth, above which the walls rose perpendicularly for many more. The poor fellow managed to tread water there being no room for swimming, until a rope was thrown to him, by which means he reached the deck in safety.

length three and a half, being generally shallow. A channel is marked out for the steamer by posts placed in the centre of the lake. Leaving Loch Oich the boat pursues her course for some distance through the canal to Fort Augustus, after which she immediately enters Loch Ness—the largest lake in Scotland—which, from its immense depth, never freezes. In some parts this loch is unfathomable.

In this inland sea (of fresh water) numbers of cutters and small schooners were tacking about. The scenery on either bank is picturesque in the extreme. On the left we passed the beautifully situated village of Invermoriston, near which is the estate of Glenmoriston, the seat of the hospitable and much-respected chief of the Grants.

Loch Ness is twenty-five miles in length, and abounds in fish of almost every description, the number and weight of which—captured this season by two gentlemen residing in Inverness—was almost astounding. They were fishing, as well as I can remember, for two days. But a full account of their exploits was recorded in the Inverness paper. This lake contains fish, in all probability, of most enormous size. Soon after our exit from Loch Ness we reached the town of Inverness,* the capital of the Highlands, in which good Gaelic—and, perhaps, the best English in Britain—is spoken. The river Ness divides the town. The principal street is generally thronged with people; and railways having, at present, not proceeded so

* After leaving Loch Ness the traveller will be struck with the sudden change of scenery. He sees in the far distance the majestic mountain forms which he has left behind him, while the country around Inverness is wooded and well cultivated, presenting only hills of very moderate height on a flat land; the whole resembling the south of England rather than the far north.

far north, we are once more transported to scenes seldom witnessed in more southern districts. Here we have a perpetual arrival and departure of four-horse coaches and royal mails, with all the bustle and interest connected with such conveyances. Here we again behold the rubicund face and portly person of the guard, in his white hat and scarlet coat and blue waistcoat: here he still blows the animating signal of approach and departure on the "three feet of tin;" while the coachman threads his way through the crowd, "coupling the leaders together." The railway engine has, however, already whistled its intention of a peep ere long at the Highland capital, so that in a year or two the present animation of the town may give place to that of cabs and 'busses from the station. Instead of the joke of the guard, or coachman, as he accepts the offer of a cigar with "Thank *you*, sir,"—laying a strong emphasis on the second word—we shall get the comfortable information that no smoking is allowed upon the platform. We are not so averse to change as to condemn the grand application of steam to locomotion, which affords a person a quick transit of several hundred miles to a dying relative, who, some years since, would have been interred ere his arrival; but, at the same time, we cannot shut our eyes to many bad effects which attend this giant march of invention. We are fully aware that many must have enriched themselves and families—at any rate they should have done so—if we only judge from the numbers that have been *ruined*, to say nothing of the many more who in the *Caledonian*, or some other equally *prosperous* line, have so burnt their fingers, as like a "burnt child who dreads the

fire," to look upon an engine as "*too hot to hold them.*"

The town of Inverness combines many advantages, amongst which I should mention an excellent academy—where, I believe, a first-rate education is given to boys on very moderate terms. It contains a number of churches, both established and free; also an Episcopalian chapel, at which two services are performed every Sunday. There is a good market. Being the metropolis of the north, the shops supply almost every article that can be required; and should the reader of these hasty notes be a sportsman, I can assure him that in the fishing and shooting department he will find all he can desire in the shop of Mr. Hugh Snowie, in Church-street. I must not omit to mention that in the same street there is another vendor of fishing tackle, Mr. Tait, who is also a hair-dresser and perfumer. I believe the articles sold by him are very good, but I can say little about them, having confined my own dealings to Mr. Snowie, whose goods I can vouch are first-rate; and that he is, without exception, the most *obliging, honest,* and *conscientious* tradesman I ever dealt with. One or two proofs of what I have asserted with regard to Mr. Snowie I cannot omit to mention. During my stay at Inverness I wished to obtain a few flies to assist me in my captures in the north. Many vendors of feathered stuff would have assured me that it was quite useless to attempt fishing in Sutherland, without previously making a purchase of almost half his stock. Such, however, was not the proceeding of Mr. Snowie. He advised me to let him inspect my book of flies, with which counsel I readily agreed. When I

brought him my long-used shabby little volume, he immediately told me that it contained one of the best collection of "real killing trout flies he had seen;" and he added, that for rivers, I needed no further supply if I were to fish for many years. He recommended me, however, to take about eight or ten flies dressed expressly for the Sutherland lochs; two of each kind he said would be sufficient, as he could send more by post if I required them. I purchased, I think, a dozen, and better killers I never had; one especially of which I have endeavoured to give a portrait—No. 3 in my fly-sheet.

Another instance of extreme honesty and fairness of dealing I must mention. I have already stated that I had given orders for the transmission of my salmon rod to Inverness. I had mentioned this to Snowie; however, the rod arrived not. On the afternoon, previous to my departure, I informed Mr. Snowie of my disappointment, at the same time telling him that I must take one of his, but that I should wish to try it first on the Ness. Of course, when I say to try it, I mean merely the casting of the line. The river being taken by Mr. Tait, no fly was attached. I took three rods, and in the course of half an hour I made my selection of one, which I afterwards purchased. When I returned to the shop, Mr. Snowie informed me that a steamer would arrive late that evening, which might possibly bring my rod; and that, although he would put by the one I had selected for me, I had better not purchase it till I knew whether my own arrived. On the following morning at seven, A.M., Mr. Snowie sent me the rod I had chosen, which I now have. Mr. Snowie

is a very well-informed person, and most willing to impart his information as regards fishing and shooting, and to exhibit the excellent specimens of stuffed birds and beasts which he possesses, as well as eggs rarely met with.

To walk along the banks of the Ness, one would suppose that the principal occupation of the inhabitants of the town was the washing of linen. The banks are spread with under-garments of every description; while the laundresses are dancing in the river, their dresses being tucked above the knee, and held securely between their legs, while with their feet they are scouring the linen under water. One great drawback to Inverness is the unwholesome nature of the water, which I am told has caused the death of some horses which have drunk it. It agrees, I believe, with the constitutions of natives and residents, while it severely indisposes strangers. I had not been above a week at Inverness, before I was seized with a violent attack of English cholera, which daily increased, and was most severe and painful after breakfast or tea; while after dinner—at which meal I always drink beer—I was free from pain. For three weeks I suffered from this attack without knowing the real cause, till I had reason to suspect the water I had been drinking. In this suspicion I was confirmed after leaving Inverness, the injurious effects of its water being proverbial in almost all places except in the town itself. It was a long time afterwards before I recovered; indeed, scarcely yet have I got rid of the effects of that unwholesome water. There are many interesting objects in the neighbourhood of Inverness. Cawdor Castle will amply repay a

visit, as also Fort George, which was erected after the battle of Culloden, to keep the Highlanders in check. Military are always quartered in the fort. There are many other interesting places in the vicinity of the town, a few of which I shall briefly describe.

Soon after arriving at Inverness I secured some very comfortable lodgings, let by a very respectable widow, a Mrs. M'Kenzie, in Academy-street.

I remained at Inverness daily expecting the arrival of my salmon rod, and also some letters of consequence. I lost little in the way of fishing, as the extraordinary drought continued; day after day being almost cloudless, without the slightest indication of rain; the barometer rising higher and higher, until it remained steadily fixed at "very dry," in consequence of which, accounts from all quarters announced that the rivers were "very dry also."

I rambled about every day beside the Moray Firth, where there is always a good breeze to refresh one in the hottest weather. The Firth is frequently very rough.

During my stay in the Highland capital I walked out to Drummossie Muir—six and a half miles distant—on which were decided the fortunes of the Pretender, Charles Edward. On my way I overtook a man of respectable appearance, with whom I shortly fell into conversation respecting the memorable battle of Culloden. He very civilly offered to go a mile or two out of his road to point out to me the graves where most of those who fell in the action were buried; and also to explain the relative position of the Highlanders and the English army. The forces of Prince Charles, being

composed almost entirely of Highlanders, were well accustomed to fighting in steep and almost inaccessible places. I could not help expressing my astonishment that he should have risked the success of his cause by contending with the English army, composed as it was of cavalry and artillery, upon a level plain, affording every facility for their manœuvres; especially as, at the short distance of a mile and a half, the steeper ground beside the river Nairn would have afforded a decided advantage to infantry. It is asserted that the Prince was too proud to take any advantage of his opponents, calculating, as he did, upon certain success. The high road runs close beside the "graves," which consist of one large trench, into which were thrown the bodies of those who fell in this fierce conflict. The battle is reported to have lasted little more than twenty minutes, in which short space of time, however, about twelve hundred men were killed, which fact is sufficient to prove the determined courage with which the contest was conducted.

A number of those who fled died in various parts of the moor, and portions of their remains are frequently found. The Duke of Cumberland, who led the British army, has left behind him the character of cruelty and barbarism, on account of his conduct towards the Scots after their defeat. The history of the Pretender is too well known to need any comment—further than that while none can behold the field of the battle of Culloden without a feeling of pity for the young Prince's hardships and sufferings, in which the noble and heroic Flora M'Donald so devotedly shared, ever attaching herself to his fortunes; while feelings of emotion

must arise in every sensitive heart on the recollection of the determined courage shown by the Highlanders on this, as on other occasions; while we can still almost behold each member of a clan quitting his labour and daily employment, and rallying round his chieftain ready to obey his behest, as the various chiefs were pouring forth their hordes of kilted warriors to strike the final blow for the independence of Scotland; while with a lively interest we revert to the day on which the aged parent parted with a son, or the maiden with her lover, dreading that it would be a final adieu—at the same time exulting with pride as they saw the broad-sword grasped by the stalwart man, or the young stripling in the service of their beloved Prince; while such feelings attend us, as we stand on the grave of so many bold Highlanders, who fought and stood firm and dauntless—as their native mountains in the storm—at the same time it is, I may say, universally allowed throughout Scotland, that it was most fortunate that the Prince's cause was defeated, although so nearly crowned with success. Had he triumphed there would not in all probability have been the freedom which is now enjoyed by the Scottish people; and Scotland might still have remained a country under the spiritual dominion of Papal Rome.

Had I been alone, I should have missed some very interesting monuments of antiquity in the neighbourhood. I was advised by my casual acquaintance, who had so kindly conducted me to the scene of battle, to visit some Druidical remains on the banks of the river Nairn, about a mile and a half distant. We pursued the Inverness road for a short time, and then, striking off to

the left, we arrived at the side of the river. The bank, which is very precipitous, required some caution in the descent, which being performed, the river—which, like all others at that time, was very low—we soon forded, scarcely knee-deep. Within a hundred yards of the river are several large upright stones, ten or eleven feet in height, extending in a line, some hundred yards intervening between each. Proceeding a little further we arrived at several chapels as they are termed. The first was opened, a short time ago, at the request of a lady resident in the neighbourhood. An urn was discovered containing human bones, which had been burned. These bones, in all probability, belonged to the victims burnt in the large wicker idols, according to the superstitious rites of the Druid priesthood. Other chapels, similar to this, appear in the immediate vicinity in the form of circular mounds, encompassed by large upright stones, fifteen and eighteen feet high. The chapel itself is in the form of a large oven, built of stones skilfully arranged, without mortar or cement, in the manner of what is termed, in the north of England, "a dry wall."

Having refreshed myself with a glass of excellent milk, at a neighbouring cottage, I returned to Inverness. On my way back I passed a farmhouse to which a young Highlander was conveyed a corpse after the battle of Culloden. The body was wrapped in a plaid. The farmer's wife remarked that some mother was bereft of her child. The mourning became her own when, on unfolding the Tartan covering, she beheld the body of her own son, whom she supposed to be in safety at a distance.

A place called Clachnaharry—a short distance of about a mile and a half from the town, on the road to Beauly—is interesting, as being the scene of a desperate battle between the Clanchattan and Munros. The spot where this encounter took place is extremely rocky, and it is very remarkable that while no rocks are to be seen in the country around, huge masses are here scattered about upon a grassy slope, amongst which is a plantation of fir trees. The rocks are very striking, appearing as if they had been hurled down from above, and had lighted on this spot by accident. The spot upon which this conflict took place is of small extent. A monument to record this event is erected upon a rock. It consists of a small stone pillar, surmounted by a gilt figure blowing the trumpet of Fame. The pillar is encompassed by iron railings. On one side is the simple inscription MUNRO; while on the opposite side appears the name of the rival "CLANCHATTAN." The third side has the initials H. R. D." POSUIT. 1821; while on the remaining side are inscribed the following words:—

HAS
INTER RUPES
OSSA
CONDUNTUR.

When we left Inverness we stopped at the village of Beauly, which consists of one wide street, containing several tolerably good shops. The river Beauly is crossed at a short distance before entering the village by a stone bridge, which divides the counties of Inverness and Ross-shire.

We soon started on foot for the Falls of Kilmorack, which are situated at about two miles from the village upon the river Beauly. Proceeding again in the direction of Inverness, for a short distance, the road turns to the right just before coming to the bridge. The view is very beautiful at Kilmorack, the river being here of considerable width. The falls are very wide, but by no means high, and viewed as *falls* they are disappointing; they have certainly been much overrated. The churchyard immediately overlooks them from a steep elevation. Again, passing onwards for about two miles, we came to a most strikingly beautiful part of the river called "The Drhuim"—pronounced "Dream." The banks of the river are very high and steep, the opposite bank especially, which is clothed from its summit to its base with a beautiful hanging wood. The water beneath alternates from the shallow stream to the dark and still pool, while along the centre of the river runs a chain of perpendicular rocks, worn into a thousand fantastic shapes by the constant running of the water, the tops rising up like sharp spires or minarets. I dwelt in rapture for some time upon this lovely scene, which like the "Eilan Aigas," a mile and a half higher up the river, is beyond description of pen or pencil, and to be appreciated must be visited. The beholder cannot refrain from an exclamation of rapture, as they burst upon his view, and it is with regret that every admirer of the beauties of nature will leave such perfect pictures as here lie stretched beneath his astonished vision. Having feasted our eyes for some time upon the Drhuim, we called at a clean and comfortable farm-house, about fifty yards

distant, where, having taken some oaten cake and some milk, or rather cream, we again pressed forward to see the "Eilan Aigas"—not, however, without passing another twenty minutes in admiring "the Drhuim."

After walking two miles more, every inch of which was romantically beautiful, the view of "Eilan Aigas" burst suddenly upon us as we approached a wall beside the road, erected as a necessary barrier against accident over the steep precipice beneath. The river here makes two branches, thus forming the island, on which stands a house beautifully embosomed in wood, in which the Stuarts, the lineal descendants of the royal house, so recently stayed for the enjoyment of the chase. Nothing can possibly exceed the beauty of this scene. It is not so utterly lonely and melancholy in its grandeur as the Drhuim, as, in addition to the house just mentioned, there is a comfortable looking farm on the opposite bank of the river, and there is also a wider expanse of view. The deep black pool beneath, and the rushing river beyond, with its fine rocky banks, must be seen to be imagined. In short, luxuriance of wood, combined with water, deer forest, wild grandeur and cultivated beauty, grassy banks and fields, heather-clad moors, and an abundance of wild flowers, form a scene of enchantment which defies all description.

CHAPTER VII.

Beauly Priory—Restive Horses—The Doctor's Horse—Beauly to Ardgay Inn—Departure from Ardgay—Another Restive Horse—Tain—System of paying for fishing at Inns—Masonic Lodge—Mails from Tain to Inverness, and Loch Inver—Sandhills near Tain.

In the village of Beauly is an old priory, the property of Lord Lovat, who resides in the neighbourhood; it has fallen into ruins, but is undergoing restoration. Here are some old monuments, and many of the M'Kenzie clan lie interred here. I was interrupted the morning after my arrival, in the operation of shaving, by the sound of voices as if proceeding from persons in a state of alarm, accompanied with injunctions, "take hold of his head, &c.," which was immediately followed by the rattling of splinter bars, and the apparently premature departure of horses and wheels, which proved to be the cause of the commotion, although, fortunately, not of a serious accident.

The coach from Inverness to Tain had just arrived, and the fresh team, containing but one tolerably quiet horse out of four, refused to wait the coachman's arrival on the box. While his foot was on the step they started, rearing and plunging, which caused him to lose one of the reins. Away went the team in a gallop, swerving to the opposite side of the street, and threatening to

take the whole conveyance into a grocer's shop, although this would have been prevented by some heavily-packed casks and chests standing outside the door, which, in all probability, would have upset the coach. Just at this instant ostlers and others who had run out from the inn had succeeded in stopping the horses and in handing up the lost rein to the coachman. After a little more rearing and plunging, they again started, galloping for about half a mile, when they settled themselves into a more manageable team. I had seen a little of the restiveness and over-freshness of the horses while at Inverness, where they were daily exhibiting their proficiency in the art of kicking, rearing, jibbing, bolting, shying, or some one or other of the propensities or vices of horses. One day a pair of these amiable quadrupeds brought the coach almost to a stand-still of ten minutes' duration in the middle of the street. On another instance, the departure of the coach was delayed for some time; while a number of manœuvres were performed to extricate a dark chestnut mare—always hot tempered—from the pole, over which she had chosen to kick herself, while her grey brother was being harnessed beside her. The horses used on this line of road, from Inverness to Tain, were invariably good workers, shewed a good deal of breeding, and some of them combined a good shape, with plenty of bone; but then we know that horses, which are incurable in other occupations, generally find their way *into* a coach, and there are certainly a few here which would not be lamented if they soon found their way *out* of it. The horses—especially those employed in harness—in this part of the country,

appeared to have peculiarities of their own, independent of the eccentricities of the species.

I was entertained during breakfast by a somewhat ludicrous performance on the opposite side of the street, arising from the desire of a mare—not to bolt like the horses which had just departed with the coach—but rather from a desire to return to the stable without starting at all. I observed a gentleman seated alone in a gig, endeavouring in the most persuasive manner to induce the reluctant quadruped to proceed; while a boy holding her head was trying to urge her forward. It was of no avail; there she stood obdurate, occasionally varying the monotony of perfect rest, by swerving first to one side, and then to the other. The gentleman who had hitherto held the whip in his hand without using it, at last brought it into play, but with great caution, arising, no doubt, from long experience of what would follow. The thong was no sooner gently administered than a certain ominous switching of the tail commenced, which was immediately followed by the usual unpleasant agility of hind legs and quarters which constitutes that very agreeable movement—especially in single harness—called "kicking." The whip, after being once more brought into action, was carefully placed in the socket. The most amusing and picturesque part of the pantomime now commenced, consisting of a series of repeated jumps on the part of the driver—jumps by which the seat was vacated for an instant, and again re-occupied. This curious diversion continued for above five and twenty minutes, during which time a little quiet "jibbing" took place; the gentleman on each occasion casting a backward glance to see against what obstacle he

was to perform this retrograde motion. Another application of the whip caused the amiable beast to put the wheels tight against the wall of the house. "Jibbing" had now ceased, but the graceful action of "rearing" ensued, and after raising the shafts on high three or four times the mare commenced and fortunately continued the only motion left her, viz: a straightforward one; and the gentleman appeared highly gratified at starting so soon. I was assured by the landlord that this was really a very successful start—half an hour being considered nothing. The mare sometimes took from an hour and a half to two hours to get into the desired motion, and yet she was in the owner's estimation beyond price. She must either have possessed very high qualities after *she did* start, or else well-broken horses must be very rare in the neighbourhood; or surely the owner would, ere this, have tried the effects of a strong dog-cart and a good kicking strap, and endeavoured to thrash her vagaries out of her; and had he failed sold her to the first bidder. A person who had plenty of leisure time, and sought for diversion, could hardly bear a constant repetition of such amusement. But a medical man, as this gentleman was, must have doubly regretted such a waste of time. Probably he made due allowance for these vagaries, and got into the gig an hour or two before requiring to start. But then the calls of a medical man are uncertain, and so is the weather; and in case of getting wet through, he had no time to change before leaving home, as when the mare wished to start, *he must* go then or never. Away she went, stepping out as if quite pleased with her recent performance.

Soon after the completion of the above performance we started in a dog-cart for Ardgay inn which lies at the head of the Dornoch Firth, into which the river Carron flows at a distance of a quarter of a mile. At about a mile, after leaving Beauly, we came to an open space of ground, around which was a little town of wooden houses which are used for cattle when a market is held here. At a distance of eleven miles from Beauly we arrived at the little town of Dingwall, in the neighbourhood of which is some attractive scenery, called Strathpeffer. We remained a short time to bait our horse, and then proceeded by the side of the Cromarty Firth as far as Alness, where we struck off to the left from the high road to Tain; and, after passing through some wild and romantic scenery, we arrived at the Stittenham inn, a lone house by the roadside. Here our horse was again baited, during which time we dined at this very clean and well-furnished house, which is of modern erection; and where, I have no doubt, the traveller would find every comfort if circumstances induced him to remain. In about two hours after our arrival we were again *en route*, and, after travelling for some miles, we descended into the road from Tain to Bonar bridge, and in a short time reached the very comfortable inn of Ardgay. This house is not large, but replete with every comfort. The culinary department is very good, and the bed-rooms are most comfortably furnished —the beds most thoroughly aired, and the supply of clean towels surpasses that generally found in inns. The landlord, Mr. Kinghorn, is a very civil and obliging person. The landlady is, I understand, equally so; but, being very unwell at

this time, I never saw her. Soon after my arrival I walked to Gladfield, the residence of Capt. Ross, of Rossie, who had so kindly offered me fishing in the river Carron. The family being at dinner I merely sought out his experienced gamekeeper, and made some enquiries about the fishing. Some rain had fallen at Inverness, and I hoped to find the river in order; it had, however, run off again; and he assured me that there was little chance of success until after another *fresh*. On the following morning, Capt. Ross very kindly came down to the inn, and strongly advised my staying for a few days, as there was an appearance of approaching rain. Weather being rather an uncertain affair, I thought it more prudent to go to Tain, a distance of thirteen miles, as my circumstances would not allow me to remain at an inn, with the possibility of continued drought. In the afternoon, therefore, I determined to depart. I ordered a dog-cart, which, however, was exchanged by the landlord for a light phaeton, which was, perhaps, a more suitable vehicle for the start which the horse had determined to make. We had taken our seats, and the luggage was stowed away. The driver applied the whip, and straight up on-end stood the horse. The landlord ordered a second application of the lash, which caused another perpendicular movement, accompanied with the breaking of the belly-band. The strap was now taken up another hole, and a second start was attempted. The same rearing result ensued, which was followed by some furious kicking, causing the driver to jump off the box; whereupon I immediately stepped out of the vehicle, having had quite enough of the amusement. The horse was

now released from the shafts, and well flogged back to the stable by the master in person, who took the whip from the driver for the purpose. The beast was generally accustomed to run in double-harness, and amongst many others at this time—having plenty of corn and little work—scarcely knew how to make enough of himself when he got the sole occupancy of a pair of shafts. He was soon replaced by an excellent mare who took us over to Tain in an hour and a half, amidst the most cutting showers of sleet and hail. Having proceeded six miles from Ardgay, the lad, who was driving, suddenly alighted, giving me the reins. I could not conceive the cause of his descent, which I found proceeded from thirst. He had no sooner alighted than he bounded up a brae by the road-side, and having taken a draught of spring water returned to act Jehu again. I had not long reached Tain ere I sallied forth in search of lodgings, and my pursuit of half an hour proved successful. I obtained very comfortable quarters, consisting of a bed-room and sitting-room, on most moderate terms. Tain is the last place in the world I should recommend the angler or tourist to visit, as it has neither fishing or scenery in its neighbourhood to attract them. My object in going to this place, was simply to obtain lodgings until such time as rain might tempt me forth to the Carron, and elsewhere, in pursuit of the angler's occupation. At Tain, however, I was destined to remain five weeks, till the 24th of June; and I leave it to the reader to conjecture what would have been the amount of my bill had I remained at an inn for that period. Poverty is not a vice, and I am not ashamed of owning that my finances would not allow me to

lounge for a month in an hotel during a drought, or even for good fishing, to pay* ten shillings per diem—above other charges—to fish, and to deliver up my captures after all. Many persons travel from the south of England to Scotland, and pursue their amusement after this fashion, and having incurred an expense of three or four pounds per week—for fishing only—capture one or two grilse or salmon, which they leave behind them; and after purchasing a few salmon at Berwick or elsewhere, return to their friends and fancy that they have performed great exploits. "De gustibus," &c. I have no relish for this kind of sport. I think it only right if the landlord of an inn pays a large sum per annum to the owner of the adjacent property, that he should charge about five shillings per day, to any person staying at his house, for the privilege of fishing; but the delivery of the fish, for the consumption of others in his house, is a most unsatisfactory arrangement for the angler, who has friends of his own to eat them. Or to take the matter in another light, let the landlord of an inn rent a piece of water, and permit those staying in his house to fish gratuitously, but to deliver up his fish. The angler gets his sport, and the landlord supplies his guests with salmon. Thus both landlord and angler are accommodated; and the innkeeper should bear in mind that the fishing alone is the cause of his house being visited, perhaps thronged during the fishing season, at *which period only* his lone inn, in a wild district, can expect a visitor.

Tain is a small clean town, containing one

* Although the general charge for salmon fishing at the inns is ten shillings per diem, only five is demanded at Ardgay.

principal street, in which are many excellent shops supplying all the *necessaries* and many of the *luxuries* of life. There is an excellent masonic lodge, called the "Lodge of St. Duthus." The brotherhood connected with it is both numerous and respectable, and the funds of the society are in a very flourishing state. I regretted that no lodge was held during my stay, as I was anxious to appear amongst the fraternity; for it is many years since I have been present at their interesting ceremonies and truly fraternal meetings. There are the ruins of a Collegiate Church here; there is an Established Church of Scotland, at which there is a most excellent preacher, and I believe an equally excellent *man*. There is also a Free Church.

The town of Dornoch, the capital of Sutherland, lies on the opposite side of the Dornoch Firth, which is frequently extremely rough: a tremendous reef of breakers called the "Geygen Briggs" are continually rolling here. There is a four-horse mail from Inverness as far as Tain, and from thence a pair horse mail to Thurso. This mail crosses the Dornoch Firth at the "Meikle Ferry," near Tain, and proceeds direct to Thurso. Letters and passengers for Loch Inver are conveyed daily by Ardgay inn, across Bonar bridge, to Lairg, which they reach at about five o'clock, P.M, and proceed by mail (from Golspie) reaching Lairg at half-past eight the following morning, and reaching Loch Inver the same evening. The mail from Inverness to Tain is splendidly horsed (barring the restiveness already mentioned), the harness is perfect, and all the *paraphernalia* is that of the old "Brighton Eclipse." On reaching Tain the letter-

bags are deposited in a very different conveyance, and proceed at a much slower rate; nevertheless they are equally safe, equally certain, and punctual in their arrival. At the little town of Tain they are put into a conveyance, being in fact a dog-cart on four wheels, which is timed by the post-office to proceed at the rate of six miles per hour. The owner of this vehicle lived next door to my lodgings, and a most civil and obliging man he was. Brown was the owner of this four-wheeled dog-cart, and also of a phaeton, both of which he had enlisted in Her Majesty's service. Brown and his son *worked* the mail. I put the verb in the past tense because, from what he told me, it appeared very doubtful whether he would continue to work Her Majesty's letters, as he hardly thought it paid him. I am perhaps saying too much about this mail, but it may be useful to those who may tread in my footsteps to know by what means they are to proceed to Sutherland and other northern parts of Scotland.

This mail cart, drawn by one horse, and carrying four passengers, besides the driver, proceeds daily to Lairg. It leaves Tain immediately after the arrival of the Inverness mail at one o'clock, P.M.; the return mail from Lairg reaching Tain at half-past ten, A.M. The mail leaves Tain for Inverness at eleven. There is, therefore, a daily communication with Lairg at the head of Loch Shin; but there is a public conveyance beyond this point only twice a week, viz., the mail from Golspie, which, as I have already stated, arrives at Lairg at about half-past eight in the morning, reaching Loch Inver at about half-past five, P.M. This mail—which is an open conveyance, similar to the Tain vehicle, but

on a larger scale, drawn by a pair of horses, and conveying five passengers, beside the driver—leaves Golspie every Monday and Thursday, returning from Loch Inver every Wednesday and Saturday.

The curious formations of sand-hills beside the Dornoch Firth present a very remarkable appearance at a little distance, being as much like each other as so many mole-hills. The sand, which is of the finest description, is perpetually flying about in every direction as it is whirled round and round by every gust of wind.

Having received a letter from Mr. Kinghorn informing me that the river Carron was in good order, I determined to start on the following day by the one-horse mail.

CHAPTER VIII.

St. Duthus' Shrine—The River Carron—Return to Tain—Seals in Dornoch Firth—Seal Shooting—Fishing Excursion—Flukes, Eels, and Trout—The Lake proves to be a Pond—Rabbit Shooting—Ardgay—Grilse Fishing in Invercarron Water.

On going down to the post-office I was disappointed of a seat, the mail being—contrary to custom—quite full. I took care to book a place for the following day, and spent this afternoon, as I best could, in rambling about the neighbourhood and making a sketch of the old shrine of St. Duthus, distant about half a mile from the town of Tain. This church is a complete ruin; interments still take place in the burial ground. It was to this shrine that James V. made a pilgrimage.

At one o'clock I left Tain by mail for Ardgay, reaching the latter place at a quarter past three. After partaking of a hasty dinner, I walked up to Gladfield, and commenced fishing in a pool below the house. After an hour's useless endeavours in the river, which had already become very low, added to which, the day was extremely bright, a very heavy rain, accompanied with thunder, induced me to desist, and again to return to the inn.

On the morrow I walked up to Gladfield to breakfast, and again fished the river in company with one of Capt. Ross' sons, an expert angler, and

well acquainted with the river. I rose two grilses; Mr. Ross killed one of about four pounds weight. This fish was in excellent condition, as his appearance and flavour testified. I dined and spent a most agreeable evening at Gladfield.

At half-past eight o'clock, next morning, I left Ardgay by mail-phaeton, and reached Tain at half-past ten. Having proceeded about three miles, we overtook a large drove of stock going to a southern market. The road was covered with cattle and drovers for a distance of half a mile. Her Majesty's mail could not be stopped. The driver, already finding himself ten minutes behind time, hurried his horse forward; while the oxen were jumping upon each other and running wild beside the road, mixing and intermingling with other detachments. One or two drovers now endeavoured to overtake us, brandishing their sticks, and vociferating oaths alternately in Gaelic and English, calling out to a drover before us to stop our horse until they came up and thrashed the driver, who still kept his horse in a hand-gallop despite all their menaces.

The day after my return to Tain, while walking on the sands of the Dornoch Firth at low-water, I observed at some distance seven objects bearing the appearance of rocks upon a sandbank. I watched them for some minutes, when I saw one or two of them move as I fancied. I immediately guessed that they must be seals, which, on a more minute observation through a glass, they proved to be. They were enjoying themselves in the warm sun upon the sand; but, on the approach of a small sailing vessel, they hurried to the edge of the water, and plunged into it one after another,

throwing up a great surf; and, after diving, came up in different places, shewing their heads above water.

I conceived a strong desire to shoot some seals during my stay at Tain, as they are very numerous along the Dornoch Firth. I never made the attempt, however, as it is extremely difficult to approach these amphibious animals, who have always a weather-eye open; and, when rising within shot of a boat, they often dive so rapidly as to escape hurt, and when wounded are frequently lost. Those who have never shot a seal, and are particularly anxious to slaughter the unwieldy monster, may have a chance of success by crossing the firth, as I was informed that in the neighbourhood of Dornoch is a deep hollow where from sixty to a hundred seals, old and young, are frequently congregated; and, by approaching them from the table-land above, a shot or two may be procured within easy-killing distance. I intended crossing to this place to try the force of powder upon them, but was prevented by one or two unforeseen circumstances.

Two or three years ago a man was staying at Tain, who made the destruction of seals his sole occupation, pursuing them for profit—a seal being worth from three to five pounds. This man lived by the trade, and having turned his attention to the matter, was most successful in his avocation. His mode of proceeding was this:—he made accurate observation of the favourite sandbanks, on which, at low water, the seals were accustomed to sun themselves. When the tide was up he embarked in a small boat, and anchored her near the bank of resort. Here he remained till his boat

was left high and dry, or nearly so, having in the meantime put on a sealskin dress, which enveloped the whole of his person, leaving his eyes and mouth uncovered. He then proceeded on all-fours to the sandbank, and with his gun ready cocked imitated the cry of the female seal, which he could do most perfectly. The seals soon approached within an easy distance, and thus—I was assured by a most credible informant—he returned with one or two seals at every tide. The profits thus produced upon the expenditure of ammunition would be enormous, but we must not forget the cold and wet—and what is far worse, the hours of watching and stillness to which he was exposed. Those who wish to pursue seals, either as a matter of sport or profit, cannot do better I believe than proceed upon this plan.

As I have already stated there is no attraction either for the tourist or angler in the neighbourhood of Tain. Nevertheless I was induced *faut de mieux* to make a fishing excursion by the advice of the "best fisher in the town." The renowned angler in question, Sergeant Maclay, late of the 92nd Highlanders, conducted me to a *canal*, as it is termed, at a distance of five miles and a half from the town. The morning was intensely hot; fortunately the road was level, as the sergeant started at quick march, which we continued with a halt only of three minutes at a cottage to get a drink of water. The veteran soldier pulled up mechanically, asking me if I was dry, informing me at the same time that this was the only water we should get until our return. This cottage was at Calrossie *town*, as it is termed; the *town* consisting only of four cottages, with one

pump to serve them. In about half an hour more we arrived at the canal. Imagine my disappointment when I beheld a drain—cut by a farmer—about four feet wide, and containing water about five inches in depth! Nevertheless, into this apology for a canal, did the sergeant peer anxiously for the sight of a sea trout. I said nothing, but walked on beside this narrow dike, till it became a little deeper, when the soldier cried *halt*, and put himself into an attitude of attack upon the water. By the time our rods were put together, the depth of water had considerably increased, caused by the tide which was rapidly coming in and flowing up this narrow drain. I fished on, meeting the tide as I went, but nothing rose to my fly. The narrowness of the water, the *unsporting* appearance of the very banks of clay, and my disgust at the *canal*, made me now indifferent, and I laid my rod down in despair, regretting that I had been induced to start on such a fool's errand. I was thirsty again with the heat, and although water flowed at my feet, being brackish, I could not drink it; I lit my pipe and determined to take it easily till the sergeant overtook me. For his approach, however, I might have waited long enough. Looking round, I observed him diligently employed on the same spot at which I had left him; which led me strongly to suspect that he was pursuing the angler's craft in the ignoble department of bottom-fishing. I turned back, and sure enough there he was, extracting some worms from a canvas bag, and in another instant a great bending of his rod —which was on the ground—proclaimed the attack of some lover of bait. The soldier, in a state of excitement, left his worms wriggling on the bank,

and raising his rod as if it were a weaver's beam, flung ashore three culprits, one upon each of his three hooks; the two uppermost of which were held by two flounders or flukes; while on the tail hook twisted and twisted an eel of about a pound weight. I detest bait-fishing; nevertheless, being in for a bad job, I thought I might as well follow Maclay's example, and so I put my rod to the humbling occupation of catching flukes. I was soon rewarded with three. Baiting again, I had a fluke and two eels, and so we continued for some time at this horrid employment. I was glad when the sergeant had enough of it, and I found myself again marching homewards with five eels and forty flounders in my basket. We halted again at the Calrossie pump for a glass of water; and the sergeant now told me that I should be sure of trout on my road home, in a small lake, about a mile from Tain, which, although preserved, I might fish, as he had leave from the farmer to whom it belonged. The sergeant told me, that the lake was only a small one, but that it contained a great abundance of trout. His answers to questions which I put to him concerning it, induced me to think that the *lake* we were about to fish had received an exaggerated title similar to the *canal* which we had just quitted. I expected but little, and I was therfore not disappointed when I found the promised water consisted of a very large pond, of no depth, being not more than from one to two feet deep, except in the centre where the weeds precluded a cast. I have no doubt this particular spot would contain some fair sized trout. I only rose one tolerable fish, and after exercising considerable patience over

small fry, part of which time it was raining heavily, we returned to Tain, where I arrived drenched to the skin, except where my plaid had sheltered me. I turned out the contents of my creel and so strange a medley it never held before. I had two and twenty trout, which, being captured with fly, were no disgrace; five eels—which pleased me far more, when cooked, than they had done beside "the canal," as they obstinately twisted and entangled themselves in my line—and forty flounders. Professor Wilson in his interesting treatise on fishing, in "The rod, and the gun," professes ignorance as to whether the reader is fond of eels, declaring his own dislike to them both on the hook and on the table. In his former position I detest him as cordially as the Professor can, but when well fried I think him our best fresh-water fish, and fit for the palate of an alderman. My forty flukes, some small, others very large, were very acceptable to myself and those to whom I gave them: when fresh the fluke is a most delicious fish.

I was much entertained with many of the sergeant's anecdotes of Ceylon, where he had been quartered with his regiment, and where, he said, the officers frequently made a most excellent bag, containing a variety of game, many small birds, and the "sweetest little deer, very little larger than a hare," besides some pretty little bears which every now and then "offered a shot." The fishing off the coast, which afforded a pleasing pastime to the privates, was of the most gigantic description. Although I was rather disappointed in my day's fishing, as I believe fine sea trout are occasionally taken with fly in this small canal, yet I must confess that my guide had not raised my

expectations high. He told me that he had sometimes killed five or six fine sea trout in an hour or two, and that we might calculate upon getting one, at any rate that we were sure of getting *something*. Sergeant Maclay is a very civil and respectful as well as respectable man, and should any of my readers happen to make enquiries about fishing during his stay at Tain, I doubt not that he would be referred to him for any information he might require. But, as I have said before, I should strongly advise the angler to avoid the neighbourhood of this place altogether, as far as fishing is concerned. Oban is a barren land for the disciple of Walton, but Tain is ten times more so. The country in the neighbourhood is generally flat and uninteresting; part of the road towards the canal is very pretty, lying through the extensive wood of Calrossie. I was satisfied with one visit to the canal and the weedy pond, and determined not to attempt fishing any more in the neighbourhood of Tain. In order to prevent the time hanging heavily on my hands I used frequently to wander about the Dornoch Firth with my gun in pursuit of ducks and different coast birds. One day, by way of a change, I walked out three miles to shoot some rabbits on a farm near Loch Slin. This lake, I am informed, contains no trout, but has a fair number of pike. The thickly burrowed and sandy soil upon the farm bespoke the number of rabbits which infested it. I was engaged to shoot with a gentleman who promised a tolerable bag, but our sport was not equal to what it ought to have been, which was chiefly owing to the ferrets working very badly, and occasionally going to sleep for an hour or

more in the holes, or, having slipped their muzzles, by regaling themselves upon the young rabbits. I never could appreciate the practice of ferretting rabbits—it is a matter of such uncertainty. Thoroughly good ferrets are seldom to be met with, and even the best are liable to fall asleep. Nothing can be more tedious than waiting an hour or two for a ferret to come out. They may sometimes be brought out by discharging powder into the hole or lighting a small fire at the mouth. The most agreeable mode of pursuing this sport, in my own estimation, is to hunt the whins and rough ground with a good terrier or two—well up to the business—the holes being previously stopped; under which circumstances it becomes a most agreeable diversion. And even without the precaution of stopping the burrows, a good terrier, hunting among whins, will afford very fair sport to the shooter.

After a residence of some weeks I again started by the one-horse mail for Ardgay, taking my final departure from Tain. Seaforth, chief of the M'Kenzie's, was a fellow passenger, and he most kindly offered me leave for salmon fishing in the Carron river, running through his estate, giving me a written permission to deliver to his gamekeeper in case he should be absent from home. I never availed myself of it, as I remained a long while in Sutherlandshire, and was pressed for time on my return southwards. I have seen the Highland garb to advantage on many occasions, but I never saw it so well set off as it is by Seaforth, who constantly wears it. I had intended calling at Gladfield soon after my arrival at Ardgay, and possibly to avail myself of Capt. Ross' permission

GRILSE FLIES.

to fish the Carron once more. Finding, however, that Seaforth was going there, and intended to fish that evening, I immediately relinquished my call until the following day. Having dined, I was strolling outside the inn, when Mr. Kinghorn, the landlord, informed me that he had received permission from one of the Duke of Sutherland's factors to allow the inmates of his house to fish gratuitously a portion of the river Carron, called the Invercarron water. This reach is of no great extent, containing only three or four pools worth fishing. The day had been intensely bright, and I thought it advisable to try a cast in the more sombre light of evening. I was advised by Mr. Kinghorn to turn my attention chiefly to the upper pool, as the lower ones were less likely, and were so encumbered with wood as to prevent their being so carefully fished. I immediately started for the pool according to his direction, and when within fifty yards of it I met a brother piscator returning with a small grilse of little more than a pound weight. This was the only successful angler out of five who had been fishing the entire day. I commenced at the head of the pool with grilse fly No. 1, and fished it over inch by inch, without a rise. I fished it over again with No. 2, with the same bad success. Again I fished it with the same fly, but the return was *nil.* I then tried No. 3, and fished the same pool over without a rise. I am, perhaps, tediously circumstantial in this narration, but my object is to prove to the uninitiated salmon fisher the capricious nature of the fish he has to deal with. Here were three flies tried consecutively over one pool, in a river for which they were especially *suited*—I believe I may say especially

dressed by Mr. Snowie, of Inverness, than whom no one can have a better assortment of flies, adapted to every river and loch in the north of Scotland. Time was wearing away, and I determined to confine myself to this pool. I now put on a fly of my own dressing—yellow body and light turkey wing. This fly, amongst others I had been told, would not suit the Carron, which required insects of a darker hue. However, *experientia docet.* The first cast was little more than getting out my line; the second, however, tempted a gentleman to the surface, with a plunge like that of a young porpoise. I had him firmly hooked: away he went like a madman across the pool, up the pool, down the pool, and round it, when he began to sulk a little. I pelted him with stones, which again set him in motion, and a more lively fish I never had to manage. I had a gaff with me, but it proved useless in the hour of need. The ferrule at the end of the handle had become so firmly wedded to the nut, by an accumulation of sand, that the latter could not be drawn by anything but a vice, which I afterwards applied to it in a blacksmith's shop. I knew that I had all to do in the water; and I therefore made up my mind for a lengthened process. After a quarter of an hour I succeeded in turning my fish, which operation being repeated once or twice more he showed symptoms of departing vitality, and in another minute I dragged him on to the sand, where one slight tap on the head enabled me to extract my fly from the jaws of the lifeless grilse. He was a fresh run fish; very short, and thick in the shoulders; his weight exactly five pounds. I continued to fish on, and in about six or eight casts more I rose another. I

felt sure of capturing this fish, as he had only seen the fly and had not tasted the hook. Having given him ten minutes rest, I now commenced at the head of the pool again; and after about twenty casts I said to a man, who had just arrived on the bank, "Here he rose, and this cast I should have him." No sooner had my fly alighted upon the water than he made his appearance at the surface, taking a hold, but not a very firm one. He felt enough of the hook, however, to set him dancing; but, although he made a good fight, he did not afford so much sport as his predecessor. He made five or six very indignant flourishes, which were not so palatable to myself. He leapt five or six feet out of water the instant he was hooked; then made one rush across the pool to the opposite side, where the same leaping propensity was again evinced, and continued in a manner that I did not approve. This salient proceeding is the most dangerous to the angler, and as it threatens a separation of hook and fish should be put a stop to as soon as possible, which is most effectually accomplished by turning the fish on the first opportunity: after two turns, in this instance, my friend allowed himself to be drawn ashore in a bewildered state. This grilse had been longer in fresh water than the last, was of a rather more lanky make, but weighed five pounds exactly as the last. I fished on for a short time longer, but approaching darkness bade me desist and be content with my capture of two grilses in the hour. I have a few remarks to make relative to this expedition, both as regards fish and the *genus homo*, to whom I made my remarks. These will be found in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER IX.

The Carron River—Grilses refuse Flies suited to their own water, and take a stranger—Salmon Fishing—How to fish a Pool—Salmon Fishing and Trout Fishing compared—Fishing generally—The Jealous Angler—*How* and *where* to fish—The man I met on the Carron.

THE Carron is beyond all doubt an excellent grilse river; and although like so many other waters—the salmon fishing is not improved by a net which is worked at its mouth, near Bonar bridge—the run of grilses up this river is sometimes extraordinary. Monday or Tuesday is the best day in the week for sport, provided the water be in order, as the nets being removed on Saturday night, the fish have the opportunity of running up for twenty-four hours without obstruction. The Carron is a small river, but extremely picturesque, and the constant alternation of stream and pool renders it well suited to the propagation of salmon.

Good salmon rivers are not in general celebrated for a great abundance of trout, still I was surprised to hear that the Carron is a notoriously *bad* trout stream, although I received quite an opposite account from Sergeant Maclay, who was a native of the district through which it flows, and had frequently fished it. I never threw a trout fly in the water myself, so that I must leave its merits to the decision of others. I observed but a small number of trout rising during the

time I was fishing. Certain flies are unquestionably better adapted to one river than another; and in all my fishing, especially for salmon, I consider two or three flies, dressed and used by an old angler on the particular river, to be a great acquisition; and it is from this cause that my fly-book contains artificial insects from a variety of quarters.

Such a promiscuous collection will, in a few years, supply the angler with every gradation of size, colour, and workmanship; and a variety of patterns from which to dress his own.

From my own experience, however, I have no hesitation in saying that residents, upon particular waters, are too hasty in their condemnation of flies, which they consider unsuited to their river. Because such have not been already tried, or perhaps seen in the locality, they are considered useless. On innumerable occasions I have seen the fallacy of such a conclusion.

I had been told that light *bodied*, or light *winged* flies would not suit the Carron. As I have already stated, I tried the effect produced by the dark flies dressed especially for this water. I tried the condemned one. Here was a light yellow body, and a light turkey wing—a thoroughly light fly—and he certainly proved successful; and I have no doubt would have distinguished himself in other pools, had time permitted me to cast him over them. I am not praising this fly as being of my own manufacture, for I had many more, dressed by the same indifferent workman, which might have failed most signally; but I mention the fact as a single instance of a condemned creature being worth a trial. The fact is, I am convinced, that both trout and salmon

—but more especially the latter, being extremely capricious in their taste—will sometimes refuse the likely lures, and will readily seize the most unlikely morsel. I heard on the morrow, that all who had fished this water to-day had found dark bodies failures, and that the few fish killed had sacrificed themselves upon hooks wearing yellow bodies. Every experienced salmon fisher is aware of the capricious nature of the prey he seeks to capture, and needs no advice as to the mode of proceeding to attain his object. Some tyro in the art may peruse these pages, and for his benefit I write the following advice: when fishing a pool, into which a stream runs, commence at the head, and fish carefully inch by inch, as the term is, to the bottom of the stream, and continue this course from the head of the pool to the tail; change your fly, and fish in the same manner, beginning at the top of the stream again. If you raise a fish, throw again a little above him; and if he fail to make a second appearance, fish on to the end of the pool as before; give your rising friend five or ten minutes, and commence again with the *same fly* as before. The chances are, that you will hook your fish this time in the same spot in which you raised him before; or if he be moving upwards, by the course I have advised, you have the chance of a capture higher up the stream. If, however, you have already *hooked* him, by no means cast over him again; proceed further in pursuit of other fish; and on your return, in the evening, or at all events in no less time than two hours, commence at the head of the stream, and come over the old spot again: by this time he has recovered from the tooth-ache or other malady caused by the cold steel of your hook,

and will in all probability return to the charge. Should this, however, not be the case, put on a rather gaudy fly; and if it be evening a rather larger one with lightish wings; and if this fail set him down as an obstinate fish that will not feed till to-morrow, which, if a *fresh* come, he will probably do to his cost, miles higher up the water. Salmon generally run up a river at night, resting in pools by day; but this general rule, like all others, has its exceptions; and a very palpable one I saw this year on the Carron. The water was very low, nevertheless a salmon of about twelve or fourteen pounds, most obstinately determined to push his way, rushed past me, and although the stream was in some places so shallow as to leave his dorsal fin and half of the depth of his person above water, still did he press onwards in defiance of everything. Salmon seldom rise at a fly when thus pursuing their onward course. The art of fishing for salmon, although the same as that adopted for the capture of trout, inasmuch as in both instances similar instruments are employed, at the same time requires a great difference in the method of proceeding. In trout fishing the angler should never remain too long in one place, and although we have a strong objection to the practice adopted by some, of *flogging* the water while they stride away down the river as fast as their legs can carry them, still while we condemn this over rapid style of proceeding, there is no necessity for trying a stream or pool over again if it have been already carefully fished. No man would dream of changing his flies in order to fish over and over again one piece of water, as he would do for salmon. There is also a great difference in the mode of casting a line for

salmon, and for trout, but there is a still greater difference in the manner of working the fly after it is on the water. In trout fishing the line should be thrown *across* and rather *up* stream, and then the point of the rod being raised, it should be drawn towards the angler, which action, together with the stream which is carrying the flies downwards, will cause them to come across the water rather in the form of a curve, causing a nearer imitation of the movement of the natural fly. After casting a salmon line it should be worked *against* the stream with slow regular jerks, the rod being kept rather in a position *horizontal* with the water, by which means the fly works more evenly, and is far more likely to raise a fish. The first exhortation which every stranger receives from old Tweed fishermen is, after having made his cast, to keep his rod down after the manner above mentioned, and always to make his line return with regular steady jerks *against* the stream. In short, the same practice is observed by experienced anglers upon every river. I shall conclude my remarks for the present upon this subject, by one or two hints with regard to trout fishing, which art can never be acquired by the perusal of a book; at the same time, assistance may be derived from a knowledge of facts connected with it. Sixteen years ago, I fancied myself a tolerable angler, as I could throw a line of moderate length *straight* enough, and, in a stream, *light* enough to capture fish. This much I could do, but no more. I soon found, however, that I was but a novice who had overcome the first rudiments, viz: the throwing of a line without cracking off my flies, which last performance is the infallible effect of the tyro's

commencement. I found on the various waters which I visited, that while a few were losing their flies, or getting their line into a tangle, a greater number were killing "good dishes;" while my own captures were "few and far between," yet I had a good rod—the same I still use—and the rest of my tackle was of excellent description. There was a something wanting, that something comprises a number of little things, a few of which I have been shewn by others, but the majority of which I have acquired by time and experience, which and which *alone* can make an adept. I do not speak in disparagement of the beginner, when I say that the throwing a good line, which is thought so much of, is but a very small portion of the angler's acquirements. For a considerable time I performed even this small task with a great exertion of my whole body, and a force which almost threatened a dislocation of my right arm. A stranger, whom I saw fishing in the Test in Hampshire, was the person who first shewed me that scarcely any exertion was required beyond a peculiar jerk of the wrist, upon which all depends; and ever since that time I have cast my line in no other way. I can throw as long a line, with my elbow pressed tightly against my side, as I can were it at perfect liberty. This knack, once acquired, is never lost, but can never be learnt by reading, or taught by description. Having said this much upon the subject of casting the line, the next point to be taken notice of is the working of the flies when upon the water. The fly cannot be *cast* too lightly on the *surface*, but the generality of anglers, perhaps, are too careful to *keep* it upon the *surface*, except at times when the water is so

extremely clear that it can scarcely be allowed to touch the element without scaring away a multitude of fish. In this extreme case give a tremulous motion to your hand, to prevent your flies sinking in the least as you draw them across the river, and let your casts be frequent. If the water be not very clear allow more time in bringing your line out before another cast; and if the water be rather "heavy" or flooded, and especially if it be raining at the time, allow your flies to sink an inch or two below water. I have invariably hooked the largest fish by adopting the last mode of proceeding under the circumstances mentioned. The reason, I have no doubt is, that at this time a trout more readily takes an apparently drowning insect than a live one, the latter being an unnatural object.

I have already observed that when the water is extremely clear the flies should be kept upon the surface by a slight tremulous motion, and that the line can scarcely be cast upon the water without scaring the fish beneath. There are some anglers who are anxious to keep all the secrets of the art to themselves, and to dispense their information to none. I heard of a gentleman this year, of such an extremely jealous disposition upon this point, that he made all his fishing excursions alone, that is to say, attended only by a lad to carry his creel, to which, however, was added an unwieldy kind of rod to enable the youth to work bait, while his master was casting a fly, which was soon abandoned for the heavier wand of enchantment, if the minnow or more ignoble worm were making larger or more frequent captures. But this was not all: the

gentleman in question not only started *alone* on his piscatorial ramble, but having learned whither a brother angler intended to repair on the morrow, he took especial care to proceed in a different direction. One would imagine that a loch containing a vast expanse of water and abounding with fish, might have sufficed for more than himself, even in his own estimation. Such, however, was not the light in which he viewed the matter, and I am told that in more instances than one he has come ashore in disgust at finding another boat upon a loch, which was eight miles in length by two in width. On one occasion I was fishing a wild mountain loch, hereafter to be described both by pen and pencil. The day was most tempestuous, especially well suited to the particular species of trout contained in the lake. It so happened that I went upon this excursion, accompanied by six others, all equally anxious to obtain a specimen or two of this singular trout. This lake is rarely visited by strangers, and indeed amongst those who inhabit the thinly populated district, there are scarcely any, except the shepherds, who are accurately aware of its position. Two of our party—a shepherd's boy, and one of the Duke of Sutherland's gamekeepers—had on two occasions fished the loch, while the remainder of the party, including two of the keenest fishers, had never seen it, though residing within a few miles. It was to this lone loch that the jealous gentleman already alluded to came, hoping to find it like a bad billiard table "disengaged." He had previously left a large lake, being sent ashore by the sight of a boat containing two anglers, and had walked three miles over a mountain road. Wet

with rain, and heated with exertion, he arrived to witness the depressing spectacle of seven rods flogging away with the zeal of so many negro drivers. He made two or three casts—putting on an expression as black as the clouds above us; his lips moved once or twice as if in giving utterance to an exclamation, fortunately drowned by the violence of the wind; and striding away over the hill he was soon lost to our view. I found afterwards that he made the best of his way to a lake, about two miles distant, expecting to launch the boat, which he found already occupied by the owner and a friend, who were enjoying their sport. He had now nothing left him but to make another asseveration, and to try the burn flowing into this lake from the one he had left in the morning. He persevered with the successful capture of a few trout, when he descried, at a short distance from him, a friend of mine who had fished the burn up before him. He now put up his tackle and hurried home in disgust, after having tramped many a mile of mountain and muir, heather, rock, and bracken, as must frequently be his practice if he take fright at seeing a brother piscator and hurry away in quest of fresh disappointment. Persons of this peculiar selfishness of temperament have, no doubt, their casual beams of pleasure, when they happen to find a loch or river really unoccupied; but as this most frequently happens on a day peculiarly bright, or otherwise unsuited to fishing, the chances are that the sum total of their enjoyment by no means counterbalances that of their disappointment. There are many anglers who are extremely jealous of showing their tackle; and I well remember an instance, in which a poor

fellow, having hooked a salmon, was "broken," losing his only fly. He asked a man, fishing on the opposite side of the river, to give him a fly, which was refused. He was about to wend his way homewards, but I gave him a couple of flies out of my book, which set him going again in defiance of the refusal. I detest selfishness; and although if I have received a hint from another, on condition of keeping it to myself, I of course consider it inviolable; I think myself perfectly justified in publishing all which I may have discovered myself, for the benefit of others. The remaining hints which I have to give are not numerous, but if they are of service to any of my readers, I shall feel amply repaid for the offer of them. I was speaking of fishing in very clear water, when I made a digression in condemnation of selfishness. But to return. When a river is extremely low, the generality of people tell you that it is useless to fish it. If this advice has the effect of keeping others at home, so much the better chance for those who go out. There is also another class of persons, who, unheeding the counsel delivered, betake themselves to the streams, carefully avoiding the standing pools, by which, if the weather be hot, they capture a number of small things, not worth taking, and leave the large fish quietly reposing in the places to which they are sure to betake themselves. If there be a breeze take advantage of it; by which I mean do not *throw* your line at all, but raise your rod, and allow the wind to perform the office for you, which it will do far more lightly and efficiently than old Isaac Walton himself. If, however, there be no breeze, still do not despair; let your gut be

long and fine, have your flies slender in the body, eschew thick hooks. Perhaps winged flies are as well avoided, simple hackles are better; but, at all events, pay especial attention to the casting of your line, which, after being thrown forward, should be gently checked when a yard above the surface, and so permitted to drop lightly on the water. Wherever a stone offers a landing-place, throw your fly on to it, and, by giving a slight jerk, it will drop from that stone so lightly that the most skilful performer could not imitate its gossamer descent. If the stream be narrow, throw on to the opposite bank, giving the same gentle check, as your tail-fly touches the margin. It will thus fall under the bank so lightly that the largest and most cunning fish can scarcely resist the enticement. I have practised this manœuvre time after time, and have generally been rewarded by a good result. On one occasion, in the month of May, I was fishing a river which abounds with trout generally of small dimensions, but containing many fish of two or three pounds in weight, which are chiefly captured with minnow, except in the summer, when they are occasionally taken during the night with a large trout-fly. The day to which I allude was extremely hot, and the sun was shining in all its splendour, not a cloud being visible in the sky. The streams, if they deserved such a term, whilst scarcely covering the pebbles, yielded me some trout of the smallest kind. I presently came to a branch of the water where the river continued its main course in shallow streams, leaving a short extent of water *almost* stagnant, but not *perfectly* so, holding its bed under a few thick trees. This shady pool I was sure would be the resort of the

larger fish, but much caution was required in attempting to capture one. I approached the bank and saw a number of large trout sailing away in all directions; I immediately sat down at a short distance from the edge and waited awhile to see what was going on; while two or three fishermen were whipping away at the main course of the river, despising this petty turn of a hundred yards of still water. A splash aroused my attention to a fish as he rose under the trees to swallow some insect which fell from its branches. I kept my eye upon the spot for a few minutes, during which the same act was repeated three or four times—by the *same* fish I believe; and this, the sequel of my story, will almost prove. I took my rod and, kneeling on one knee at some distance from the bank, threw a long *underhand* line over the spot where he had risen. My fly had no sooner touched the water than a plunge and a pull pronounced the rising and hooking of a good fish, which, after about ten minutes hard fighting in a depth of a foot of water, I landed—weighing nearly a pound and a half. I was obliged to remain inactive for a short time to allow the turmoil of the water and the fright of other fish to subside. I then commenced anew, and out of this little breezeless pool, of about twenty yards in length, I took four trout weighing nearly six pounds, which, together with another caught in a pool farther on weighing nearly a pound, in addition to twenty-five of more moderate dimensions, made a fair dish for a bright day's fishing.

I promised in the last chapter to say something about fish, and the man whom I met upon the Carron river. I have been led to say too much

perhaps about the former, but I have finished for the present.

The *genus homo* as personified by the individual to whom I have alluded, deserves but a few words. He was a bad specimen of man, but at the same time, one frequently met with on every river. I was killing my first grilse, watched by the man in my proceedings, from the bridge which crosses the river about a hundred yards above the pool I was fishing. In a few minutes the worthy was beside me with my fishing bag, which I had left upon the bank above me. He told me he had brought it down, fearing that some children who were herding cows might steal it. His own physiognomy bespoke a lurking cunning which I thought would endanger the bag in his possession far more than in that of the children, whom I had previously passed and who had seen me deposit it. I disliked the man the instant I saw him, and I felt certain that a hope of better gain alone had made him honest in a trifling point. He proceeded to look at my fresh run grilse as he lay a stiffening corpse on the land. He saw me raise the second already mentioned, and filled his pipe with my tobacco, and took a sup of whiskey from my flask, while I waited ere I fished again. With the killing of my second fish he declared himself much pleased, offering at the same time to carry my bag of captures to the inn. I, however, dispensed with his services, assuring him that I was able and willing to perform the service for myself. He now *kindly* offered to attend me on my next day's fishing, which I also declined. The following morning I was informed by Mr. Kinghorn, of Ardgay inn, that he feared I had been fishing

beyond the march or boundary of the Invercarron water, as the keeper of Balnagown, the adjoining property, had been down to say that such was the case. The keeper had been informed by the crafty and over-civil rascal that I had done so. Such, however, was not the fact; but it needed not the eye of Lavater to discern in the "protector of the bag" the man who would live by poaching, or lying, as best might suit his purpose. I like to describe men as I find them, and I should not be giving this man his due if I did not say that while he has the countenance bespeaking low cunning, and the civility which promises deceit, he lacks the strength of person to render him dangerous, and the courage to make him guilty of anything beyond some petty fraud.

CHAPTER X.

River Carron—Gladfield—Departure for Lairg—Tandem—Journey to Lairg—Lairg Inn—Departure from Lairg—Journey to Aultnacalgach—Heavy Rain—A Fishless Loch—Ben Mhor—The Sugar Loaf.

THE following morning I went out again with Mr. Ross, jun., and hooked one grilse, who felt the barb too keenly to permit him to make a second attempt in the evening when I again fished the pool. The day was extremely hot, and the sun very bright, until obscured by a dark cloud bespeaking thunder, which we heard rumbling in the distance. The water was very low, and the state of the atmosphere adverse to sport. There is one pool termed "the chamber pool," in which we saw a salmon of about twelve or fourteen pounds weight, rushing round and round in a circle upon the surface of the water, which is here of considerable depth. This diversion he repeated several times, at intervals of ten or fifteen minutes. He was evidently in pursuit of some small fish. It is a very rare thing to see a salmon thus engaged. We cast over him again and again, and offered him a variety of flies to the extent of half our stock, but to no purpose. We remained a considerable time at this spot during a heavy thunder shower, unwilling to relinquish a chance of capturing so good a prize.

This pool is extremely difficult to fish, although Mr. Ross, who was well acquainted with the water, surprised me with his practice upon its surface. In fishing the greater part of this pool, one is compelled to throw from a height covered with trees which threaten to catch one's line at every cast. I returned once more to dinner under the hospitable roof of Gladfield, where I had the pleasure of again meeting Seaforth, and spent a most agreeable evening in the company of the hospitable host and hostess, and a family of sons who inherit the spirit of the true sportsman and gentleman from their sire, together with all the ease and politeness for which the male sex is ever indebted to female society, the refinements and elegancies of which are here personified in their mother, the hostess.

I bade adieu, with reluctance, to the Carron—not only as a river containing an abundance of grilses, but as being associated with the greatest kindness and hospitality; and on the morrow I left Ardgay by the one-horse mail, which, after crossing the extremity of the Dornoch Firth at Bonar bridge, stopped at the small inn, on the opposite side, for the purpose of stabling the tired beast: to recruit his strength for returning to Tain on the following morning. Two horses were here brought out, to convey us forward over a heavy road. The mail having its full complement of passengers, besides plenty of luggage, required the addition of a leader. The poor grey who formed our tandem looked but ill suited to the undertaking. He stood before us the remains of what had been a good horse many years since. His fore legs, bent under him, displaying the effects of hard

work: although an ostler, who was to profit by his sale, would declare he had been "foaled so," as is the case with many high-bred horses. It was a curious sight to behold the yoking of the leader. The traces being too short were lengthened by two or three pieces of string. It required several men, and a lapse of some time, to conclude the arrangements. All being complete we started and proceeded for about two miles, when, being obliged to stop at a cottage to leave a parcel, the grey, feeling inclined to look at his load, turned himself partially round. I got down and put him straight again before the driver took his seat. The whip was applied with a grand flourish, but the jerk caused by the start up hill broke one of the faithless lengthening strings, whereupon the grey turned fairly round and shewed symptoms of a wish to return to Bonar bridge. A gentleman seated beside the driver, assisted by myself, repaired the broken cord, and once more put the head of the beast towards Lairg, to which place we wished to proceed. We led the animal up the hill, and then getting into the conveyance we went down the brae at a pace which threatened further accident to the harness. We completed the descent, however, in safety, and proceeded at a hand gallop for a short distance, when the leader again turned round to look at us, threatening at the same time to put us over a precipice. The gentleman occupying the box seat, together with another beside him, jumped down, and once more put all things straight; and we saw the grey's face no more until we arrived at Lairg. The driver, whose name I have before mentioned, was a very civil man, and of few words, unless the "hoot, hoot,

hoot," sounds which he constantly utters to his horse, deserve the epithet. Wishing to give us an opportunity of seeing some fine scenery he had avoided the regular main road in order to convey us by one more picturesque.

At a distance of three miles from Lairg our road brought us to the river Shin, in which no stream or broken water were discernible to indicate shallowness. In answer to my question whether we were going through the river? I received the laconic answer, "We'll try." The bed of the river was tolerably level, that is to say, there were no deep holes to be avoided. The water, however, was sufficiently deep to make us raise our legs from the foot-board behind, which disappeared beneath us. Every now and then a large stone sent us dancing upwards and downwards, as the foot-board came in sight, and again disappeared. Meanwhile, the "gallant grey" kept his *footing* and his *head* forward. We arrived safely on the opposite side, and in a short time reached Lairg. The scenery through which we had passed—especially that beside the river Oikel —is extremely beautiful.

We found most comfortable quarters at the inn at Lairg, the best in the county of Sutherland. The culinary department at this house is very well conducted, and the liberality and profusion displayed at dinner, and still more at breakfast, is far beyond expectation. At the last named meal I never beheld such an assortment of dishes or abundance of food. The charges here, as at all inns in Sutherlandshire, are extremely moderate—bed, one shilling; breakfast, fifteenpence; dinner, eighteenpence. Our breakfast here comprised the

following edibles: cold lamb and beef, broiled salmon and trout, the same fish pickled, besides marmalade, jams, and jellies, an abundance of eggs, cakes, oatmeal cakes, bread, toast, and most excellent cream and butter. This most comfortable and well-built house is situated at the head of Loch Shin, commanding a beautiful view of the lake, which contains an abundance of the great lake trout, and a multitude of smaller fish to be taken by fly. The landlord of the inn grants permission to visitors to fish for salmon in the river Shin, on payment of ten shillings per diem—with the usual condition of delivering up the fish.

I have already stated my opinion of this system, and it is hardly necessary to say that I did not take advantage of my proximity to the water on such terms. Under any circumstances no one would make the attempt at this time, the water being too low to afford a chance of sport. We remained here in full enjoyment of the good things afforded by the house, and the delightful ramble by the loch side until the Monday morning, when, at seven o'clock, I started with my companion and Mr. Metcalfe, who had been a fellow passenger from Ardgay on the previous Saturday. It was a matter of uncertainty whether we should obtain places by the mail when it arrived from Golspie; the first vacant seat was already bespoken by a gentleman staying at the inn. Under these circumstances we thought it advisable to start on foot betimes, with the chance of room when the mail should overtake us, or of continuing our pedestrian journey to Inchindamph, a distance of thirty-two miles. The morning was intensely hot and somewhat oppressive, but I forgot fatigue in

the luxury of independence connected with pedestrianism, by which means of locomotion scenery is viewed to the best advantage, and spots, picturesque in themselves or endeared to us as affording a half hour's rest, are treasured up in the memory of the past. Thus, the grassy knoll upon which we sat, the rock which shaded us from the noontide heat, the sparkling burn, or crystal spring, whose refreshing water has slaked our thirst, remain for ever vivid in the recollection. Mr. Metcalfe and myself agreed, should there be but two vacant seats in the mail, that one should be taken possession of by my companion, who, not being very robust, preferred the conveyance of wheels to walking, while we should continue our way on foot for mutual companionship. As we were both in the enjoyment of health and activity we could not act otherwise. For two persons to take the only vacant seats, leaving the third party to tramp alone in the rear would have been a truly selfish arrangement. We had walked five miles and were seated to cool ourselves, when we espied the approaching vehicle at some distance coming at a rattling pace down hill after the manner of Highland horses. In the course of some minutes it overtook us, having vacant places for two. My companion was soon in comfortable possession of a seat, while Mr. Metcalfe and myself, according to previous agreement, were about to follow on foot; but the driver, finding that a spare seat would be thus left unoccupied, and also *wishing* to accommodate us, told us that he was very willing to do so, provided the other passengers, three in number, had no objection. Consent was readily acceded to this proposal, and we immediately ascended

the vehicle, which now contained six passengers besides the coachman. We had but a small amount of luggage; Mr. Metcalfe, my companion, and myself, having left our heavy baggage at Lairg, well knowing that it would be an encumbrance in the remote district to which we were proceeding. I had a small knapsack of clothes consisting of nothing more than sufficient, my rods, and a gun-case, the contents of which, had I left behind me, I should, in all probability, the more have needed. The day continued very fine for two or three hours, although the burning heat of the sun bespoke the near approach of rain, which we got to our heart's content some miles beyond Oikel bridge, where we had changed horses. Clouds had suddenly sprung up, and the dense blackness behind us portended a thunderstorm, which, although confined to rain only, when it overtook us, was rather a succession of waterspouts than what is generally understood by the former term. All descended from the vehicle to ease the horses up a long steep brae, except two female passengers and one lazy representative of the male sex, whose form would have been both reduced and improved by the daily ascent of a similar hill. We had gained about three quarters of a mile in advance of the mail when the torrent descended in all its fury. I wrapped my body in my plaid, thinking nothing of my legs which, being bare below my kilt, only required a rub to dry them. My bonnet was saturated ere I reached the summit of the hill; but I imbibed moisture in a far less palatable form, as it was administered to my neck and shoulders by a lady's umbrella, an article which should be prohibited in public conveyances by a

legislative enactment, as a nuisance to the public. The road from Lairg traverses a district, wild and treeless, except near Rosehall, which appears as a woody spot in a land otherwise waste. We passed two small lochs after leaving Oikel bridge, the first and largest of which is close by the road side, and, ruffled by a good breeze, is tempting to an angler until he learns that it contains no fish. This is a curious circumstance, especially in Sutherlandshire, where every water teems with trout. I can hardly imagine that it is wholly untenanted by the finny tribe, but I was assured that such was the case, and that some trout which were put into it a few years ago, all died. The lake is full of leeches, which is supposed to be the cause of the absence of fish. I am not, however, satisfied with this explanation, as there is a loch hereafter to be mentioned, which abounds with leeches, at the same time containing the celebrated Gillaroo trout, which are supposed to be chiefly indebted for their fat and handsome shape to these useful creatures, upon whom it is thought they feed.

The second loch, a very small one, at a little distance from the road, abounds with trout of a minute kind. This lake is difficult of access owing to the swampy and rushy nature of its banks. Notwithstanding the torrent which still descended with unabated violence, there was a gleam of sunshine which fell in all its brightness upon the side of the lofty Ben Mhor. This mountain, at all times magnificent, appeared signally grand. I shall never forget it as it burst suddenly upon my vision. His precipitous side, lit up by this passing gleam of sunshine, presented every rock and furrowed water-course clearly to the

sight, whilst white and fleecy clouds were winging their rapid flight far beneath his summit. The gleam now forsook the giant only to bring forward the less elevated but more striking form of the Sugar Loaf. This mountain is of a most singular shape, having two distinct summits, which, however, in certain points of view, assume the appearance of one cone, from which it derives its name.

CHAPTER XI.

Aultnacalgach—Loch Borlan—Character of the Landlord—Loch Urigil—Burns—Fishing at Ledbig—Loch Mulach Corrie.

Our original intention of proceeding to Inchindamph on Loch Assynt was abandoned by the advice of a fellow passenger, who recommended a short sojourn at a small inn, called Aultnacalgach, which is the most convenient resting-place for the angler wishing to fish the lochs of Assynt. At one o'clock we reached this inn, which is situated upon Loch Borlan: the road passes between the house and the lake, which is a mile long, and scarcely a quarter of a mile in width. We alighted here, while the horses were refreshed with a little meal and water; and finding that we could be accommodated with a bed-room and sitting-room we took our small amount of luggage out of the vehicle, which departed in a few minutes more to convey its saturated passengers to their destinations, one of whom wished to remain at Aultnacalgach, but the house being too small to receive him, in addition to ourselves, he proceeded eight miles farther to Inchindamph. The landlord was absent from home, but his better half in the meantime busily occupied herself in airing sheets, and in making other necessary preparations for our comfort. There was no meat of any kind in the house, but plenty of eggs, and excellent milk and

butter. Bread being an article never used by the inhabitants of this remote district, we were obliged to dispense with, and accept as a substitute oat-meal cakes, which were made after our arrival. Coals are never seen in this district, as the carriage would render the expense of purchase enormous; the want of them is, however, most amply compensated by the excellent peats consumed by the inhabitants, who have only the trouble of cutting them, close to their houses, and after leaving them to dry, and then stacking them, have a store laid up which the most inclement winter could not exhaust. We soon made ourselves warm and comfortable at a most excellent fire, while the rain continued to fall in torrents without. In defiance of the weather, Sandy Menzies, the landlord's brother, a keen angler, was plying the art not for pleasure but for the pot, having turned out soon after our arrival for the purpose of catching a few trout for our tea in lieu of flesh meat. It was amusing to witness the cool way in which—with a plaid over his shoulders and a pipe in his mouth —he left the house; and having shoved off the boat which he managed with one oar in his left hand, engaged his right in inviting trouts to tea. In about half an hour he returned with a tolerable number, which he proceeded to clean, popping them into the frying pan (already prepared for their reception), from which they were speedily conveyed to us, together with half-a-dozen eggs, and such cream and butter as can be met with only in such places as these, where the cow derives her nourishment from the natural highland grass.

Late in the evening the weather somewhat improved, and Mr. Metcalfe and myself embarked on

the loch, which soon became extremely calm, when, having killed a couple of dozen trout, we returned to shore immediately opposite our inn. The landlord had returned home. I liked his honest countenance at the first view, and I never afterwards had reason to change my opinion formed on this occasion; and I take this opportunity of assuring those who may happen to sojourn for a few days at this lone house that they will find in James Menzies a most excellent specimen of a Highlander. He is frank and honest as his countenance bespeaks him to be, liberal and obliging to his guests whom he uses every exertion to render comfortable. His only failing is, that he resembles myself in one point, that of hot blood; or, to use his own expression, he is "short in the temper." This he declares himself to be; at the same time I must say that, during a considerable sojourn in his house, I never saw it or heard it displayed to any person whatever. I am not sure that he could as truthfully return me the compliment.

My original intention was to remain at this place about a week, but I was unavoidably detained here for a considerable time. I received letters soon after my arrival, which rendered it imperative that I should stay until I received fresh postal communication, which is a work of time here, as the mail only runs twice a week.

Two or three days after our arrival at Aultnacalgach, Mr. Metcalfe walked with me to Loch Urigil; that is to say, we crossed Loch Borlan in the boat which we left on the opposite side to await our return; and from this point we performed a most tedious mile on foot. After leaving Loch Borlan, we ascended for a short time a

moderate elevation, from the summit of which both lakes can be seen. From this point our road was chiefly a matter of descent. The whole route from Loch Borlan is extremely irksome, although the distance is but short, and there is no steep brae to climb; at the same time there are a variety of impediments to quick and easy walking. Heather is far less troublesome than the soft mossy ground and small swamps, to say nothing of innumerable wide dykes of eighteen or twenty feet in depth, at the bottom of which is a stagnant water of the same dark colour as its banks. The whole of this tract of land, as well as many others in this district, is composed of peat moss, which is in many places from twelve to fourteen feet and more in depth. No person can perform this course dry shod, even at the hottest period of drought; and the heavy rain of Monday had so increased the usual amount of moisture that we were walking sometimes more than ankle-deep, and occasionally falling or plunging knee-deep into some insidious bog bearing the appearance of tolerably firm ground.

Loch Urigil is said to be two miles in length, but any person taking his course along shore will find to his heart's content that it is far more. It varies in width from half a mile to three quarters of a mile or thereabouts. It is a very picturesque lake, and contains several islands, upon one of which that rare bird, the black-throated diver, breeds; besides wild geese, and ducks, and other wild birds; which, together with innumerable gulls, are perpetually soaring aloft, or floating on the water. There was a good breeze upon the lake when we reached it, which increased

every minute. We each killed a fair sized creel of good trout, but I was rather disappointed on the whole, having heard this loch much extolled. The fish are certainly very superior to those in Loch Borlan, being of a fine yellow colour, small in the head, and thick in proportion to their length, and running tolerably even in point of size. They were not rising freely; so after two hour's fishing I returned to Loch Borlan, where I caught three dozen more. The breeze subsiding I desisted for this day.

Next morning there was no breeze whatever. Loch Borlan stood like a mirror, in which every adjacent object was reflected as clearly as reality itself. After waiting for some time, hoping that wind would arise, I determined to abandon the lakes, and to betake myself to some small stream to fish for my dinner.

There is a burn which runs into Loch Borlan, at about a quarter of a mile from the inn, with which I became acquainted on the evening of my arrival; but which, flowing over a peaty bottom, produces trout of a black and dirty appearance. I had caught three at the mouth of this ugly water, one of which was as black as a sweep, and of such a deformed shape, that I determined never again to entice so frightful a representative of the finny tribe to the surface of the water. At the lower end of the lake is another burn, which flows over a rocky channel, and contains trout of good shape and colour, but small in dimensions, and few in number. This burn, which flows out of the lake, after pursuing its course for about a mile, meets another with which it joins, and, augmenting by their union

the breadth and depth of water, flow onwards in one stream to the Cama Loch, hereafter to be mentioned. This burn I left for the present untried, and proceeded by the road to Ledbig, two miles from Aultnacalgach, on the way to Inchindamph. Here I commenced fishing the last mentioned stream, which was rather low; the rain of Monday last having nearly run off. I began with a small pool, in which I caught a good many small fish—one or two at every cast. It was quite ridiculous to behold the eagerness with which they rose when a slight curl appeared on the water. I continued this amusement until I believe every tenant of this small expanse of water had tasted the hook, and was either captured or determined not to come again: at all events they ceased to rise. I shifted my ground to the head of a small waterfall, much swollen at the time by a flood, which I shall describe in its proper place —a flood which carried away a bridge close to the inn at which I was staying, and affording a sight never before witnessed in the neighbourhood. I continued to fish this burn to its junction with the one before mentioned. The extent of water was about half a mile. I caught sixty-nine trout, weighing nine pounds, two of which were a pound each, leaving the rest of small dimensions, as the aggregate weight will show. The fish in this burn generally run small, although some good sized ones are occasionally met with; one of above four pounds in weight was hooked by the Duke of Sutherland's gamekeeper a year or two since, which, after above half an hour's fight, succeeded in breaking his line. On the first good morning Mr. Metcalfe and myself determined to start for Loch Mulach Corrie,

situated about seven miles from Aultnacalgach, and rather more than two from Inchindamph. This lake is celebrated as being the only water in Scotland containing a peculiar species of trout, called the Gillaroo, justly esteemed for the beauty of its form and the firmness of its flesh. This fish is met with, I believe, in one or two of the lakes in Ireland. The capture of this rarity is a matter of great uncertainty; and I had already been informed that to catch three or four was considered a great achievement, and that it was more than probable we should return with empty creels. I was determined to make an excursion to this lake, and it required but little persuasion to induce Mr. Metcalfe—young, active, and ready for anything—to join me. Our obliging landlord had promised us the use of his dog-cart on the previous evening, and early in the morning he was seized with a strong desire of fishing the same water, which, although a resident here for sixteen years, he had never seen, but to which he thought he could conduct us. Fortunately, however, on our way, we met the Duke of Sutherland's keeper, who was also willing to join us in our attack upon the gillaroos. John Sutherland ran down to Ledbig for his rod, and soon took his seat beside me at the back of the trap, in which we proceeded for another mile, being six from our inn. Here, in the midst of a drenching rain, and a wind approaching to a hurricane, we alighted to hopple the pony whom we left to graze till our return. We pushed the dog-cart off the road after the manner of this district—in which inns are so "few and far between"—that it is absolutely necessary to carry hopples for your horse, and also to remove

your vehicle from the roads, which, in this county, are only twelve feet in width, including the green sward on either side. We now commenced climbing a very steep brae, containing plenty of obstacles to a racing pace, in the form of heather, rocks, and peat moss, with its occasional swamps and morasses. I pride myself upon being more than an average walker, both in point of pace and endurance, on level ground, and not a bad one over a moor, at the same time I must confess that I had enough to do to keep pace with the keeper, a well-knit and active man, and accustomed to traverse these hills almost daily. We had started a little in advance, leaving poor Menzies to hopple his useful "blackey." Sutherland had, I believe, intentionally hurried his pace for the purpose of giving the landlord some work to overtake us. When nearly at the top of the brae, he said, "now let us have a look at James who carries too much beef to travel fast up hill." We were astonished, however, to observe how rapidly our worthy host advanced. Although five and forty years of age, at which time he acknowledged that he had lost his "suppleness," and weighed above fifteen stone, he ascended the hill at a far fleeter pace than many strong and healthy lads of twenty. When he reached us as we stood to await his arrival, he acknowledged that the brae was a teaser, but a fine thing to reduce a man who was growing "over stout." This man had been a good walker in his youth, and thought nothing of it, which may be readily believed from a fact related by his *wife* and acknowledged by *himself*, viz: waking at two o'clock, one morning, with the recollection that his supply of tobacco—of which he consumes a very

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fair allowance—was exhausted, he dressed himself, and, taking a "nip," or to use his own term, a "tasting" of whiskey, he set off at three, on foot, for Rosehall, a distance of sixteen miles, where he purchased the needful article (common twist), and was home again at half-past twelve.

After a heavy walk of what is called a mile, but which is far more like two, we reached Loch Mulach Corrie, which, without Sutherland's aid, we should in all probability not have found at all, as Menzies was considerably out in his reckoning as to its situation. We did not see the lake until we were close upon it, and I cordially welcomed its appearance, hoping, at all events, to capture a specimen or two of its rare inhabitants, which had induced us to proceed in defiance of a most tempestuous wind, accompanied with a rain which continued to fall in torrents. The wind cannot be too high for this loch; the fish are so wary that they will seldom rise, even with a fair breeze more than sufficient for any other lake. I was not long in putting my tackle together and commencing an assault upon this lone water, lying at the foot of the magnificent Ben Mhor, which rises abruptly; his face smiling and frowning as a sun gleam or dark shadow fell upon it; while his forehead to-day was only once divested of a covering of dark lowering clouds. This is the lake to which I have already alluded as containing the finest trout, while the leeches are also innumerable. I thought not of the blood-sucking propensity of its last named tenants, but waded into its waters; not, however, without considerable caution, which I recommend to all who may attempt the same. This is, in the strictest application of the word, a "dangerous"

loch, inasmuch as there is a great facility, especially for non-swimmers, of being drowned. Any person not wearied of his existence will soon find reason to deplore his folly if he wade without the utmost caution into Loch Mulach Corrie. Near the shore at the end of the lake, at which we commenced, it is necessary to wade for some little distance in order to ensure even a chance of success, I mean of a rise, not of suicide, of which the great danger consists in this apparently continued shallowness of water. Let the angler "look well before he leap" into a depth from which he may never be extricated alive. I found myself during this day's fishing repeatedly standing, at one instant, in water scarcely knee-deep, while another onward movement would have plunged me into an abyss of inky blackness. The high wind which set this lake in motion, like a "troubled sea," rendered caution on this occasion doubly necessary. Whilst my bare legs were offering food to the leeches, my kilt was soaked by the foaming billows; my upper garments would have been equally saturated by the descending torrent had not that best of garments and truest of friends, the plaid, bid defiance to the storm. I have already promised further remarks upon this most useful upper garment, and I think it best to devote a short chapter to the consideration of its *advantages* and *disadvantages* fairly considered. I had not been many minutes knee-deep in the waters of this famous loch before a tug proclaimed the attachment of something animate to my fly. Sutherland, who had fished this loch before, and knew the peculiarities of its inhabitants, cried, "be careful, sir, handle him gently, for his mouth is tender and apt to break its hold." I proceeded

with him as I would with a grayling, whose tender lips claim the same consideration. I walked nearly ashore, where I landed my first gillaroo of three quarters of a pound. Before I had him ashore I admired the beauty of his form and also of his colour. The tinge of this trout is very remarkable, being that of a pink lilac instead of the glowing yellow of other trout. The beauty of *form* consists in the shortness of his person, combined with a width and thickness of the shoulders almost resembling that of the perch. The arrival of this fish upon the bank rekindled the ardour of the rest of the party who were employed in selecting likely flies from their stock. Mr. Metcalfe was soon amongst the leeches, and Sutherland proceeded about a hundred yards in advance, whilst the robust and hearty Menzies made his way to the opposite side of the lake, where, with an old rod thrice broken in the top joint, and the whole apparatus crooked as a ram's horn, he set to work upon the foaming billows of this little inland sea with all the enthusiasm of an angler, and the strength and determination of a Highlander of fifteen stone.

The weather now improved for a short time as far as rain was concerned, but the all-propitious wind remained still reckless in violence. The stronger its tempest, and the whiter the foaming waves of Loch Mulach Corrie, the better the chance for the disciples of old Isaac who were employing his craft on this occasion. How it went with us must be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

Loch Mulach Corrie—The Gillaroo Trout—Return from Loch Mulach Corrie—Evening after Fishing Loch Mulach Corrie—Fishing in the Burn—View from Hill behind Aultnacalgach—Loch Bhallan—Elphine—Loch Madie.

We continued fishing, almost without intermission, for six hours, during which time we were far more successful than we had expected, from the account we had received of the probability of a blank. The sum total of our spoils at the end of the day amounted to eighty fish, out of which number there were three common burn trout, which was a plain contradiction of what is asserted to be a fact, namely, that this loch contains gillaroos only, to which species the exceptions, however, are so few as to become a rarity in this particular water. We had amongst our captures some twenty of a pound and upwards, and very few under half a pound in weight. The gillaroo trout is heavy in proportion to his length, owing to the depth and thickness of his shoulders. This fish is remarkable for having within a kind of gizzard, which is cooked with him, and considered to be a dainty. The gillaroo is, perhaps, the handsomest of the trout species; he also affords most excellent sport, being very active and strong in the water. His flesh is remarkably firm; but I think his rarity has induced some persons to overrate his flavour. While I own that, without doubt, he is an excellent fish upon the table, at the same time I cannot

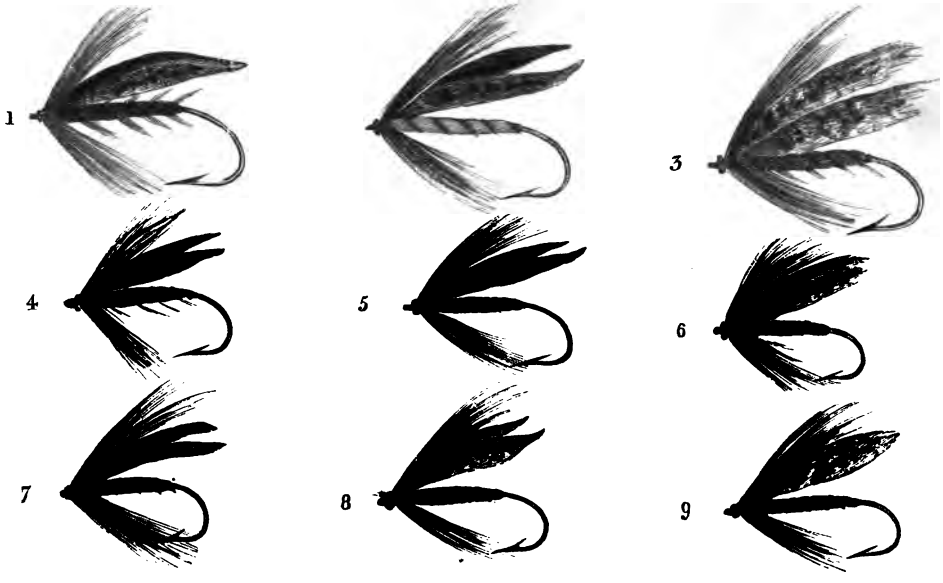
carry my encomiums so far as to declare him—as many have done—infinitely superior to any other trout. I have not only eaten others of finer flavour in places where, possibly, they might be partially indebted to superior cooking; but I tasted many trout from other lochs during my stay here—fried by the same person—to which I gave a decided preference.

I was told that there are many fish in Loch Mulach Corrie, weighing three and four pounds each, but that they lie in a part of the lake which cannot be fished without a boat, which, however, will not ensure success, if other circumstances be not favourable. A gentleman, who resides for several months in the year, in the vicinity of Oikel bridge, where he rents fishing and shooting, came over with a party of friends during my stay here, and at a very early hour in the morning—about four o'clock—started for Loch Mulach Corrie. This gentleman, who is a keen angler, and for some years past has been in the habit of fishing the various lochs in the neighbourhood, drove some miles on the road in his boat on wheels, and then taking it off its carriage, managed to convey it to the lake by means of a horse and several hands, which were pressed into the service on the preceding day. The party returned, however, without a single gillaroo; and, as I was informed, without having had a rise. These fish are supposed to be fond of a rather gaudy fly, but I believe the principal requirements are, in the first place a strong wind, and then their own inclination to rise. All fish are capricious enough, but these appear to outherod Herod. A gentleman informed me that he had on one or two occasions fished this lake, when

they rose as fast as possible for about twenty minutes; but for some hours previous to their commencement, and for as many afterwards, the water remained undisturbed by a single rise.

I was chiefly indebted to-day to No. 1 and No. 4—in my sheet of loch flies—while it was about two and a half to one in favour of the first named. I have already stated that the head of the loch, on the side of my commencement, is shallow for some distance out. As the angler, however, proceeds, he will find the deep water approaching nearer to the bank, and also the bottom changing from a level sand to a bed of rocks, which will set him tripping every now and then, and without caution continued, probably give him a cool immersion over a stone as big as himself. The opposite side of the lake, immediately under Ben Mhor, is the best for fishing; but, to-day, the high wind being dead against it, I found the operation of throwing my line laborious and disagreeable during my passage through the water off this shore. At a late hour in the afternoon, about twenty minutes after the gillaroos had ceased coming to the surface, we all met beside a spring, at which we took a parting glass of cold water, tempered with a strong "tasting" of the mountain dew. Having each, for an instant, surveyed our captures, and lit our tobacco, we commenced a return over the mossy road of our morning's travel.

We fully expected to continue our tramp for seven miles more, as "Blackey" had disappeared, and Menzies told us that, in all probability, he had slipped his hopples, in which case, according to his usual custom, he would gallop home to the



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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

stable in impudent forgetfulness of his master and the trap. In a few minutes, however, the beast was found quietly grazing with his hopples on, notwithstanding which checks on locomotion he had contrived to wander to a considerable distance. The pony being soon harnessed, and yoked to the dog-cart, we started in a hand gallop—*nolens volens*—and were glad once more to see our inn, where a roaring peat fire, well baked garments, and other comforts were prepared for our return. We had been drenched with rain since the morning, and seven miles of sedentary existence in the dog-cart had benumbed us with cold. It was worth the exposure to wet and wind for the day to experience my sensations when I sat with my legs in hot water, and clothed myself anew in clean and dry garments. At the conclusion of my toilet, which sacrificed appearance to comfort, the evening meal made its appearance. This supper consisted of tea, plenty of eggs, cream, butter, oatmeal cake, barley scones, and loaf bread, which had been provided, and was regularly supplied twice a week by mail from Golspie, a distance of forty-three miles; this being the nearest place from which to obtain the commodity. As soon as I had seated myself to a discussion of the above named articles of food, two dishes were placed on the table, one containing fish simply fried, the other being composed of fish also, but surrounded with rice and anointed with curry; the two last articles having been purveyed in my knapsack to this lone inn. In addition to the above named articles of food was added a tender young chicken, bred and killed upon the premises. He had been split and done upon a "brander," and presented

himself in the form of a spread eagle—a most delicious morsel. Here was no "butcher meat," as it is termed in the north, and yet there was an ample feast. He who would not enjoy such a meal, for lack of greater delicacies, deserves no better verdict, after starvation, than "sarved him right." If any fastidious person who has been moving in the circles of *haut ton* be disgusted at the bill of fare which is here given, I wish him no worse employment than an excursion to Loch Mulach Corrie, such as I had to-day; and I will undertake to say that the mountain air will not only restore the unhealthy hue of his pale cheeks to something like the decent colour of a man, but will so sharpen his appetite that even the old sire of our spread eagle would be deemed a tender morsel.

When Mr. Metcalfe and myself had concluded our repast, we summoned the good landlord, who had feasted also, to partake of a social glass, which, while he discussed, and smoked his never exhausted pipe, I thought, within my own mind, this is real enjoyment as far as earth has the power of bestowing it. Who, thought I, would spend his time in the unsatisfying pleasures of a town life; who would purchase a ticket for a ball at the rate of two shillings per hour, when he could enjoy a mountain air and a comfortable evening at a far smaller cost, and what is of far greater value, an easy freedom of costume to suit his own personal ease, and a mind untroubled by remorse at his day's occupation, alike in the capture and the eating of his gillaroos! The closing scene of to-day was our retirement to our respective beds, where a snooze awaited us, from which, without a turn, we did not awake till our frames were

thoroughly refreshed for another day's adventures in the angling business, which was once more transacted on the burn at Ledbig. The sun was bright and the water very low, so I was compelled to be satisfied with the capture of thirty trout, some of which were of a fair size.

The following afternoon, being Sunday, I ascended the hill immediately behind the inn, from the summit of which—being no great elevation—I obtained a magnificent view, comprising within its range nine lochs, including Loch Borlan, Loch Urigil, Loch Madie, the Cama Loch, and Loch Ah. Straight beyond the Cama Loch, at a distance of many miles, my eye rested on the ocean, upon which I discerned the island of Lewis. On ascending a height in this district, loch after loch comes into sight; in fact, to use the somewhat Hibernian expression of Sutherland—the duke's gamekeeper—the spectator would fancy that half the "*land* was *water*." I came to a small mountain loch or tarn on the top of this hill, in which I saw several lizards and leeches, but discerned no signs of fish. I was afterwards informed that this little *lake*, or large *pond*, contains no fish whatever; but I recommended our host to put some trout into it, in order to try whether they would not "increase and multiply" in defiance of the leeches, which are said to destroy fish in some lochs, while they form the fattening nutriment of the gillaroos. Menzies promised to try this experiment; I trust it may not be postponed season after season, as is the habit of people in this neighbourhood, where every thing is intended to be done, and in some instances is well commenced, but seldom proceeds further than to verify the old proverb, "Well begun is half done,"

at which point it generally stops, as having performed its duty, and soon sinks into oblivion. I have already alluded to the lizards and leeches, to which may be added an abundance of frogs of all sorts and sizes, while toads are unknown in this district.

Next day I waited for the arrival of the mail, at one o'clock, which keeps her time most punctually to this hour, except when obliged to make a *detour*, owing to the flooding of the river Shin; in which case, her arrival here is delayed nearly one hour later. Having received my letters I commenced fishing again in Loch Borlan. The sun was extremely bright; the breeze, however, was good; the fish were rising tolerably well, and after two hours I came ashore with fifty-one trout, and walked up a steep brae, over peat, moss, and heather, for a mile and a half to Loch Bhallan. This lake, I believe, was never fished by a stranger before, at least so I was informed; and a boat has never floated upon its surface. Many trout, however, have been taken here by shepherd boys, and other inhabitants of the district; while the "evil report" of the tenants of this water, combined with the fagging approach to it, have hitherto deterred the more aristocratic angler from attempting a cast here; and it was rather a desire to see this avoided loch, than an expectation of sport which induced me to pay it an evening visit.

I was repaid for my trouble, however, in beholding one of the most melancholy pieces of water I had ever seen. Others who visit this spot, under peculiar circumstances, may wonder why it appeared so *triste* to me. Much depends upon our own feelings when visiting a particular place; much

depends upon the circumstances under which we visit it; much depends upon a ray of sun, or the gloom of a thunder cloud; at the same time, independent of all these considerations, Loch Bhallan —in my estimation—possesses a peculiar power of its own to cast a gloom over those who visit its shores. It appeared to me the personification of every thing dark, ominous, and gloomy. On my way to this lake I put up a few grouse and hares, while the golden plover entertained me with his shrill whistling note. But the moment I came within sight of the loch, every symptom of animate nature ceased. Not a bird did I see; not a sound did I hear, save my own footstep through the stunted heather, or over the swampy peat. On my arrival at the loch its waters were still, except now and then, when a peculiar breeze—known only by those who have traversed moors —swept over its surface with a mournful sound, leaving the lake once more to brood in silence over its momentary perturbation. Having come thus far to be disgusted with the first appearance of this gloomy lake, where nothing appeared living above its surface, I resolved to try the effects of the angler's wand to raise some living being from the "vasty deep." This is a nasty lake in every acceptation of the word. The waters of this loch are entirely supplied from peaty sources; while the lake itself is of great depth, full of holes and deceptions; and its banks consist not of gravelly shores and heather-clad promontories, but of rushes, grassy eminences, with impending stones of sufficient size to threaten destruction to the angler; while they deserve not the appellation of rocks which have faced the storm and tempest for a

thousand generations, and in their giant strength disdain to fall upon so small a creature. I descended with necessary caution into the waters of this loch, which, like Loch Mulach Corrie, are shallow near shore, but run down abruptly to a depth which has never been fathomed. In both lakes the point at which to expect success is the line between depth and shallowness. I fished round this lake and extracted from its dismal water eighteen trout, seven of which weighed three quarters of a pound each, and six nearly a pound apiece; but although they proved very well when cooked, they were, at the time of their capture, the most deformed specimens of their race, as might be expected from the dark and peaty element which they inhabited. Their large heads would disgrace fish of twice their weight, while their huge eyes stared at me as if they meditated vengeance upon me for disturbing them in their dark abode. Their appearance was ugly enough to induce me to throw them back into their element, but their size being good, and the arrival of butcher meat at my temporary home being uncertain, I gave them a tap on the head which ended their existence. I was glad when I turned my steps away from this deathlike water, and became a new creature when I again heard the crowing of the cock grouse and shrill whistle of the golden plover.

On my way home I again tried Loch Borlan from shore, where, although late in the evening, I added eighteen trout to my creel, and soon afterwards made myself happy in the small but comfortable quarters of Aultnacalgach.

I have given an unpleasing picture of Loch Bhallan, but I believe I have not overrated its

demerits; at the same time, to "give the devil his due," I must say that I believe, were its waters to be fairly fished by a skilful angler with the great advantage of a boat, very large trout might be taken; their size amply repaying his trouble, provided he has no objection to their ugly shape, and their dirty colour. With regard to the flavour of these fish, it was very good, but their flesh was rather soft.

The useful "blackey" was put into harness next morning by our obliging landlord, who drove Mr. Metcalfe and myself to what is termed the town of Elphine, which consists of a number of scattered cottages, the occupants of which have each a small portion of land which they cultivate for their own subsistence. There is a small school-house here which is the only building which deserves the name of *cottage*, while all the other tenements come under the denomination of *huts** many of which are of the most wretched description. The occupants of these dwellings live, however, wholly independent of any other place, being supplied with small articles of grocery by an inhabitant of the place, who occasionally buys a sheep of some of the shepherds, and performing the office of butcher, retains what he requires for himself, and

* The generality of the cottages in this wild district are of a very rude description. There is one tenanted by a grass-keeper which stands close by the side of Loch Borlan, on the Ross-shire side of the burn Aultnacalgach, a wretched tenement composed of loose stones piled together, the interstices being filled with peat, of which material, together with rude poles, a kind of porch is constructed, through which, as well as the roof, the smoke issues. Within this cottage it is almost dark, the light of the sun being admitted through one tiny window, while the volumes of peat smoke renders the place scarcely habitable. The family residing in this house consist of the grass-keeper and his wife, two sons, and two daughters. The old woman who speaks only Gaelic, is almost constantly employed in spinning wool for making the clothing of the family. The grass-keeper recognized his own dwelling in a sketch which I made, but wished I had not represented so miserable a cottage, as he is to have a better soon.

vends the remaining portions. To this person we were indebted on one or two occasions for mutton —being the only flesh meat to be procured—during our stay at Aultnacalgach, which is only three miles distant from Elphine. The requirements of these people are but few; and with the exception of coffee, tea, and sugar, are to be obtained almost independent of cost. The Cama Loch and Loch Madie, which are close at hand, supply fish to those who will take the trouble of catching them; while the small pieces of land, similar to allotment grounds in England, give them corn and vegetables in return for their labour; while nature has afforded excellent spring water. Elphine is a very interesting place, both in point of its picturesque situation in these wild and rugged highlands, and also as exhibiting an independent mode of living unknown to a more southern people. Here everything and every person are, to a certain extent, in a primitive state, and I could not help being struck with the air of contentment which pervaded the dwellings and rested on the countenances of these people. From what does this contentment arise? From one simple cause, viz: that man is here living in a state more nearly approaching that in which he was originally created—unenlightened, perhaps, by science as she daily unveils some hidden mystery, or sends forth some new invention; but, at the same time, enjoying the only true and valuable light of a gospel which was, for so many centuries in this country—and is still in foreign lands—locked up and sealed by a designing and juggling priesthood, who deal it out as it suits themselves, changed and metamorphosed to their own purpose, rather as the trick of a juggler than as a matter of reality.

While, therefore, these people have in their possession the only necessary book, which the education of their school has enabled them to read, they have their bodily necessaries supplied by the adjacent land and water. The only articles which they have need to purchase with money, are the *luxuries* of life, such as tea or coffee, sugar, tobacco, and snuff, in the use of which last commodity almost every Highlander and old woman indulge themselves, to a great amount.

The object of our expedition to-day, was not to make observations to afford matter for the foregoing remarks, but to cast our flies upon the waters of Loch Madie, which is at a distance of a quarter of a mile from Elphine.

As the reader may suppose, from our description of this town, no stable offered accommodation to "Blackey," so we unyoked the useful beast, and again applied the hopples, and having put the harness into the old dog-cart, which we pushed off the road according to custom, we proceeded again over peat moss to the lake, where we found a boat belonging to the person (who performs the office of butcher, grocer, &c.) already mentioned, at our service. This boat is like a little ship, in point of size and accommodation, well adapted to the purpose of fishing, but requiring two men to row her. The oars are very long and heavy, and are handled by two men seated side by side upon the same bench. While the brothers M'Lean are baling out some superfluous rain water, we will busy ourselves in preparing another chapter.

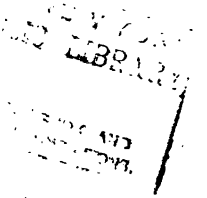
CHAPTER XIII.

Loch Madie—Red-bodied Fly—The Fuin Loch and River connecting it with Loch Madie—Loch Ah—Loch Borlan—Loch Madie—The Charr—Inchindamph—The Caverns—A Mountain Burn.

We stepped into our small *ship*, and crossing the very deep water at the head of the lake, arrived in a few minutes at some good fishing ground on the opposite side. During our passage across the loch, Menzies was engaged in letting out his line, at the end of which was attached a small trout which I had taken off shore, while the boat was preparing for our reception.

When we started, there was scarcely any wind, but a breeze sprung up, in a short time, sufficient to move the fish. I caught about fifteen in a few minutes, when the wind again lulled, so we pulled on for three miles in a calm, ready to commence anew should a wind arise. The loch still remained unrippled, so at one o'clock we landed in a gravelly bay, and spent nearly three hours in discussing our luncheon, and watching the sky, hoping that a few clouds might portend a coming breeze. The sun shone brightly, and we had almost determined, either to return home or to make our way as quickly as possible to the other end of the lake, two miles farther, and to fish a river connecting it with an excellent water called the Fuin Loch. Suddenly we discover[illegible]

LOCH MADIE.—*Pages* 146—161.



breeze on a distant part of the lake which, however, ceased on reaching a certain promontory before us. We now determined to wait, hoping that this was, as it proved to be, the precursor of wind, which would shortly affect the whole lake. Another half hour's expectation fulfilled our hopes; the water's surface now heaved itself in waves, crested with white foam. Our small bark was soon launched, bearing old Walton's disciples to the opposite shore, where the breeze was the strongest, on an excellent bay, in which I soon captured thirty good trout, which rose greedily at the fly. The red body here did great execution both in my hands and in those of Mr. M——. I must here mention a proof of the killing powers of this fly, No. 1. The number of fish which had seized and tasted my hook, added to those which I had taken, had worn out my good servant, whom I could not replace by any exact similitude.

Mr. M—— was induced by my success, to change his tail fly for the only one he had exactly resembling my worn out friend. I had put on the nearest resemblance to the deceased killer, contained in my book, but although he did his duty tolerably well, the counterpart of my "used up" morsel was beating him at the other end of the boat, in the hands of Mr. M——, who previous to this was far behind me in his captures. The day was rapidly passing, but we availed ourselves of the last declining rays of light to fish the bays on our return. When we reached the spot from which we had originally embarked, I had ninety good trout in my creel, Mr. M—— having between sixty and seventy more, while the troll-

ing tackle at the stern of the boat had failed to excite a single fish.

Menzies laboured under great disadvantage, as it was only when we were crossing the lake, or returning howewards, that he had any chance of making a capture.

Trolling requires a considerable depth of water, and also a much more rapid progress of the boat than is at all suitable to fly-fishing, so that one department or other must be sacrificed to a certain extent.

This is a very beautiful lake, five miles in length, and in many places of very considerable depth, containing a great number of *salmo ferox*, which attain a vast size and weight. This loch also abounds with excellent sandy bays where the angler will seldom fail of obtaining sport. This is considered to be the latest loch in the district, being in its prime during the months of June and July, whilst the best season for the other lakes is during April and May, after which the fishing rapidly declines.

The shores of Loch Madie are very grand, being of considerable height, and composed of rock and heather, and here and there are some patches of wood, chiefly consisting of birch, which affords an agreeable variety, wood of any kind being so rarely met with in this part of Sutherland. The singularly abrupt mountain called the sugar-loaf, which forms a most conspicuous feature in this district, rises on one side of the lake, while on the opposite side stands the noble Coul Mhor. I was disappointed during my stay at Aultnacalgach in not being able to reach the Fuin Loch, which is considered even

superior to Loch Madie for the number and eagerness of its trout; there is also a small river connecting it with Loch Madie, which contains an incredible abundance of fish, which rise very freely, both in its streams and pools. This river has a run of less than a quarter of a mile between the lakes. The Fuin Loch is shallow, with an even gravelly bottom well adapted for wading—there is no boat upon it—I made several attempts to reach these waters, the mode of accomplishing which, is by going to the further end of Loch Madie in a boat, and proceeding thence on foot.

On the several occasions on which I embarked with this intention, we were compelled by wind to abandon the attempt. One day, being three miles on our voyage, the breeze became so strong against us, that we could make no further way; another time we had nearly accomplished the same distance, the breeze being in our favour. The wind however soon became so tempestuous, that the M'Leans told me that although we could easily reach the other end of the lake, it would be quite impossible to bring the boat back, without which we had no means of returning, as there is no road whatever, and the mountain path on either side the lake would be one of immense distance, and almost inaccessible.

At the head of Loch Madie a stream flowing from the Cama Loch, which is situated at a few hundred yards distance, makes a beautiful fall of about sixty feet, containing a great volume of water, and forming a large pool of great depth beneath, which contains a number of fine trout. The fish in Loch Madie, are well shaped, generally of a fine golden colour, well flavoured and

running very even in point of size, generally about three to the pound.

Loch Ah, four miles distant from the inn of Aultnacalgach, on the road to Inchindamph, is a small and shallow lake, containing several small islands upon one or two of which trees are again seen. This is an early water and affords excellent sport in the months of April and May, producing remarkably well-flavoured trout, which cut pink, have small heads, possess great symmetry of form, are extremely lively in the water, and average a greater size than those of any other lake in the neighbourhood, with the single exception of Loch Mulach Corrie. I was far too late in the season to expect much sport upon this loch, the capture of eight or ten trout being now considered equal to as many dozen on a favourable day in April.

There is a boat upon this lake, belonging to a gentleman of the name of Clark, who is extremely kind in offering the use of it to any angler who will undertake to draw her up on the shore after landing. This boat is of a peculiar build being very long and narrow, something between a Cambridge eight-oar and a canoe; she goes rapidly through the water, propelled by a pair of short light oars, or rather paddles, and although I should not like her slender make in a rough sea, yet she has the merit of being very water tight, which is seldom the case with boats on the Scotch lakes.

This loch, although so shallow as to allow the oar in most places to touch the bottom, and perhaps in the deepest part, not exceeding ten feet or thereabouts, requires much caution in wading,

having in most places, a soft sandy or muddy bottom. I was wading one day, and succeeded in reaching two of the islands, but notwithstanding a careful navigation, I was on one occasion so deeply sunk, as to have considerable difficulty in extricating myself from the mud which was still yielding to my weight, while I was compelled to remain motionless until the turbid state of the water should clear sufficiently to show me a firmer ground upon which to make my next footing. There is one drawback to this lake, viz. the difficulty of getting a good wind upon it; which is caused by its sheltered situation, protected on every side by lofty eminences; only on one occasion did I find its surface well curled, and then it was foaming like a little sea. This lake would perhaps come under the appellation of "dreary" on account of the number of high reeds, in some parts of it, which afford rather a *triste* appearance, and a melancholy sound is produced as the breeze passes through them. There is a fine view of the mountain called Canishp from this lake. It frequently happened that a wind which formed a good curl on the more exposed Loch Borlan, scarcely dimpled this sheltered piece of water, from which however I generally succeeded in taking a fair number of fine trout. Red, and yellow-bodied flies are good here, especially the former, but both are surpassed by those having a kind of lilac body, warped with silver twist, similar to fly No. 6, in my fly sheet.

On my next visit to Loch Madie, after being about an hour upon the lake, such a tempestuous wind arose, that we were compelled to come ashore. I continued to fish by wading, and

killed seventy trout, amongst which were some very fine ones, besides one charr, which is but very rarely taken with a fly. The few that have been caught generally were small; the specimen which I captured to-day was above the average size. He rose in deep water close to shore. The appearance of the charr when first caught is very beautiful, his belly being of bright scarlet, gradually mellowing into a pale pink. The brilliancy of colour soon fades after the fish is taken out of the water.

It is only now and then that any divine service is performed in this wild district. One Sunday "Blackey" conveyed Mr. M—— and myself to Inchindamph*. We intended going to "the preaching," as it is called, but no minister attended to-day; we therefore walked in the afternoon to some caverns, in the neighbourhood, well worthy of a visit. The first is at a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the inn of Inchindamph.

There is another of much larger dimensions, at a distance of about a mile farther, at about two hundred yards from which the visitor will be delighted with a singular prospect of the burn (which has formed these caverns), as it pursues its course under ground. When the burn is flooded, the caverns cannot be entered. The water was very low at this time, affording us an easy access to them.

The caves, although by no means equal in size

* For some distance before reaching Inchindamph, some of the finest limestone rocks I ever beheld, continued on our right, terminating at the head of Loch Assynt. These rocks form one long and connected range of several hundred feet in height, in some parts resembling the ruins of an old castle, and are grand and picturesque in the extreme.

to the Derbyshire caverns, are very interesting, as being the effects of the water of a little burn, unaided by art, or the work of miners. The second cavern is the more striking curiosity, while it certainly yields to the first in point of locality. I was much delighted with the effect produced by rock and water in this place, of which I made a sketch on another occasion, which draft I was compelled to conclude quickly, being nearly driven mad by myriads of midges, which are more numerous and annoying in this district than in any other with which I am acquainted. A visit to the second cavern, already alluded to, will afford some idea to those unacquainted with mountain burns, of what a gently-trickling stream of water (ankle deep to-day) can effect, when increased by heavy rains falling upon surrounding mountains. I walked dry-shod into this second cave, and having gained an entrance, was compelled for some yards to proceed on my hands and knees over huge stones and rocks, which had been brought down by mountain torrents, while the same power of water had hewn out a vaulted roof above me.

I now entered a large chamber, filled with great masses of rock, and lighted by a large aperture from above. Such is the effect of water, when urged, year after year, in its onward course, in a Highland country

Shortly before arriving at this cave, we beheld the burn through a large aperture in the hill we were ascending, as it pursued its subterraneous course. After ascending about sixty feet higher, we came to a large orifice in the ground (resembling the crater of a volcano), the sides of which

were perpendicular; on looking down, we beheld the water as it rushed with its murmuring sound beneath us.

I have endeavoured to give a faint idea of this curious burn, whose water is clear as crystal in its natural state, in which we beheld it so clear, that a pebble could be plainly discerned at a depth of twelve or fifteen feet. If a heavy rain of an hour's duration were to fall upon the majestic mountain of Ben Mhor, in the immediate vicinity, this burn, now ankle deep in its shallows, would descend in the torrent of a wall of water, rushing into the cavern which I visited, and whirling round and round, would sweep away all light inanimate objects, and would carry the ablest swimmer to destruction, by whirling him impetuously against the pinnacles of a rock, or wheeling him round and round in an eddy, finally suck him down to an oblivion of this world and its associations.

Those unacquainted with Highland districts are frequently too sceptical, or careless; but having myself lived long in the "land of the mountain and the flood," I know burns sufficiently not to trust them for a single hour. I am well aware, that the trickling rivulet which at this instant would lull me to sleep by its gentle murmur, would perhaps in one hour carry me into eternity.

I would strongly advise the reader, confiding as he may be "in man," or any thing else, never to repose any trust in a burn—I know nothing in nature less deserving of confidence than a mountain burn; fine weather over his head and around him, as far as the mountains will permit

his vision, are no security to him, if he fall asleep beside a burn. A mountain stream is not to be trusted; it is a thing which never deserves confidence. I shall have occasion to prove what I have stated presently, when I come to describe the sudden descent of a burn, which evinced what it could do when it pleased*.

We returned from our cavern expedition to the inn at Inchindamph; from which we departed as soon as our pony was ready to return to Aultnacalgach.

One morning two gentlemen arrived, having walked from Lairg, and being informed by our landlord that his house was full, they were about to push forward for Inchindamph. Overhearing the conversation between Menzies and the pedestrians, I hastened to offer the use of our sitting room as a sleeping apartment, which they readily accepted; and the brothers were soon accommodated with an excellent bed, upon a large and steady table, which was pushed into the corner of the room.

After the departure of these gentlemen, who remained here for a week, I took up my quarters entirely in this room, occupying the table-bed; which arrangement I found far more comfortable than changing my room on the arrival of a fresh visitant.

Soon after this our party was increased by the arrival of an English clergyman, who was making

* On our way to Aultnacalgach, at about two miles from Inchindamph, we hoppled "Blackey" by the road side, and proceeded over the moor for a distance of about half a mile, where we were gratified with beholding a most beautiful spring of water, clear as crystal, which comes gushing out of a solid limestone rock, by seven orifices. This was, without exception, the coldest and most refreshing water I ever tasted.

a piscatorial tour. Menzies informed me that this was "the Bishop," being the term generally applied in this part to English clergymen.

Our landlord was surprised to see his boat proceeding up the lake, unpropelled by oars, or any visible agent; in a few seconds he discerned, through a telescope, the head and shoulders of a man rise above the water.

The gentlemen already mentioned were very good swimmers, and made a practice of bathing once, frequently twice daily. The eldest (who is a Lieutenant* in the navy, and used to entertain us with many amusing nautical anecdotes) had returned from rather an unsuccessful expedition to Loch Urigil, which he continued to fish in a pouring rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, which abated before he reached Aultnacalgach, on his arrival at which place he got into the boat, and having pulled to a part of the loch unencumbered by weeds, plunged overboard, and swam for a considerable time, towing the boat after him.

* This gentleman was lately mentioned in the public journals, as being severely wounded on board H. M. S. Triton, before Sebastapol, by a shell, which carried away a portion of his side. He was taken to the hospital at Therapia, where, as his wound was not considered mortal, I trust he is convalescent.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Oikel River—Salmon Traps—Fishing in the Oikel—Return to Aultnacalgach—Light nights—Loch Madie—Sudden descent of a Burn—A Calf in danger of drowning—Rescue—Bridge falls in—The Landlord's Brother disappears through a fracture, and reappears without fracture—Grandeur of the scene—An injured Highlander, and an injured Bridge repaired.

AT half-past eight in the morning, I drove to Oikel bridge, which I reached soon after ten, finding an excellent breakfast prepared for me at the inn, by order of a gentleman already alluded to, who rents a portion of the River Oikel, which he had kindly invited me to fish to-day.

This excellent grilse water I found in pretty good order (rather low if anything), while the day was intensely hot, the sun extremely bright, without a breath of wind to cool the suffocating atmosphere, which indicated an approaching thunder-storm. It was by no means the day I should have selected, but being previously fixed upon, I had no alternative but to keep my appointment.

Soon after my arrival at the inn, my invitant came down, having fished a lower part of the river, and tired, and overpowered with the heat, he had come to the conclusion, that it was utterly useless to cast a fly until late in the afternoon, when there might be a chance of raising a fish. We whiled away an hour or two in conversation, after which, we strolled up the river to some falls, where, for some time, we sat down, beholding an

unsporting mode of capturing fish. In the rocks over which the water here descends, are several large holes, termed "traps," into which ascending salmon and grilse are constantly falling, as they attempt to leap the cataract, which many accomplish, while the more unsuccessful drop into these traps, from which they cannot extricate themselves. In the course of a quarter of an hour, we saw five ill-fated fish fall into these holes. Two men soon arrived on the opposite side of the river, one of whom having a large hoop-net on the end of a long pole, resembling a landing-net on a large scale, walked steadily over the slippery rocks, knee-deep in the descending water, and proceeded to thrust the net into the traps, from which he took nine grilses and two good-sized salmon, returning with one individual at a time to his companion, who stood on a rock with a thick stick ready to fell each new comer. It was by no means a pleasant spectacle, to behold the murderous manner in which the blows were repeated upon those more tenacious of life. The traps being now void for the present, the eleven fish were thrown into a small pool, to be cleansed from their blood, and were then ready for a distant market.

This mode of fishing is let to men who rent the water, independent of the right of angling with the rod, which forms another distinct letting of the river.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, we commenced fishing, notwithstanding the continued brightness of the sun, and the absence of all breeze. There being several rods upon the river to-day, each party had a portion of water assigned

to him for his day's fishing, the points at which he was to commence and terminate his operations, being described or pointed out by the gentleman who had invited us. I had the piece of water from the falls, to Oikel bridge, as my portion. It is but a short reach of water, about two or three hundred yards in length, comprising four pools in all. I was escorted to my starting-point by an old fisher, who was instructed to shew me the best places, as they are termed, which most persons, who have had some experience, can discover for themselves pretty accurately.

I was rather amused at first with the methodical manner in which he called upon me to halt at a particular spot, and proceeded to put me through my evolutions, with a kind of military accuracy.

I soon knew, from his advice, that he was an old angler on this water; at the same time, there was, perhaps, an extreme precision in his directions, which might strike the beginner with a kind of awe at the dark and subtle mysteries of the craft, while they could not fail to appear, to an old practitioner, to be rather exaggerated, by the following directions—"Now, sir, if you please, stand upon that rock; let out one inch more line; now let out five inches more; now cast under yonder stone; now come ashore, and commence three feet lower down the stream; take up two inches of line, not *more*," and so on.

After following these injunctions for a short time, I commenced a little lower, and proceeded in my own way, which so satisfied my attendant, that he declared I had been at "the trade for years," and needed no advice from him; he sat down, and smoked his pipe, telling me, that he.

took a pleasure in seeing "a pool fished with judgment." When near the tail of the first pool, I rose a grilse, "There you have him, sir," said my attendant; and after a good deal of hard fighting, and leaping, and strong pulling against a tight line (which I was obliged to keep upon him, to prevent his going down another fall), I brought him nearly to the rock on which I was standing, when Sandy gaffed him, and brought him safely ashore. He was a nice fresh run grilse, of six pounds weight.

Much of the pleasure of fishing was destroyed by the heat, which, in this ravine between the rocks, was almost overpowering, while myriads of midges almost drove us mad. We continued to fish to the bridge, without obtaining any further sport. I was not out altogether more than an hour; yet, in that short time, had the day been favourable, four or five grilses would have been no extraordinary feat. Four other rods, which had proceeded down the river, took nothing; so I felt that I ought to be contented with my single fish.

I soon proceeded to Mr. W——s' highland cottage, which his own good management and ingenuity have rendered most comfortable, being replete with every necessary, and many luxuries; while sleeping accommodation for his friends is of surprising extent, in so small a house.

I am at all times partial to ablutions in cold water, but I think I never enjoyed a bath so much as I did this afternoon, in the River Oikel, where on coming ashore I had a good supply of coarse towels, and a change of clothes, which I had brought over in the morning. Having made

my simple toilet by the river side, I walked about fifty yards to the house, where I partook of an excellent dinner, and spent a very agreeable evening. I started for Aultnacalgach at ten o'clock, and reached our little inn soon after midnight, if night I can term that period which, while not considered to be day, in this northern latitude, knows no darkness during the summer months; the sun's orange streaks of light being visible from the time of his setting to his rising, an interval of short duration, and during which he leaves sufficient light behind him, to enable the tourist to enjoy the scenery through which he may be passing, to read out of doors, and to go to bed without the use of a candle.

After a night's rest, accompanied by a gentleman staying at our inn, who formed one of the party yesterday at Oikel bridge, I drove to Elphine, and again embarked on the waters of Loch Madie; where we first experienced a gentle breeze, then an interval of calm, after which a torrent of rain, which continued to descend with little abatement, for several hours. A strong wind soon arose, which prevented our reaching the Fuin Loch, and which soon increased to a gale; this set the surface of the lake in a foam, ever and anon dashing its water over the sides of our little ship; which although constantly baled out, formed a reservoir at the stern, sufficient to keep our captures swimming and jumping in their element, and in a fresh and living state on our return to shore. We killed one hundred and eighty trout between us, two or three strings of which we presented to the owners of the boat. We

reached Aultnacalgach at ten p.m., well drenched, and ready for our evening meal.

The next day, Sunday, will ever remain impressed on my memory. The morning was extremely bright; Loch Borlan lay like a mirror reflecting every object around it. The sun continued to shine in all his brilliancy, the heat being intense. At four o'clock in the afternoon, I strolled out as far as the Aultnacalgach Burn, in whose waters I was glad to cool my hands and feet, as I sat upon a stone in the middle of its bed, which was almost dry, save here and there, where a few small puddles were supplied, by what at this moment was a trickling rivulet, so small as to be almost noiseless. While the intense heat bespoke the presence of electricity, which must soon vent itself in a storm, not a cloud could I discern in any direction. In half-an-hour's time I heard a rumbling noise, which was again repeated in a few minutes, and left no room to doubt was a peal of thunder. Every instant the sound became louder, and more unmistakable, as the peal was reverberating among the surrounding hills. Presently I observed a mass of copper-coloured clouds piling themselves up, over the summit of a hill behind me. On reaching the road, and looking towards Oikel Bridge, the heavens presented a dense blackness, extending from the horizon to a certain line, beyond which the sky, and every thing beneath it, were as bright as the sun could make them.

I walked to our inn, distant about a hundred yards, where I had just commenced my dinner, when my attention was drawn by a sudden rushing noise, and the descent of such a torrent of

rain as I never witnessed before or since, and in all probability never shall again. I could not see the opposite bank of the narrow lake, which still lay unruffled by wind, but danced upwards as it was pelted by the huge drops of rain. The sudden rushing noise which I have mentioned, proceeded from a volume of water pouring down the channel of a little burn close beside the house. Though dry half an hour before, I now beheld it foaming into the lake. After making its passage under the road, in ten minutes more the stone conduit was no longer sufficient to contain it, as it spread far and wide, hurling heaps of stones into the road, and urging its headlong course over the highway. I forgot my dinner in the interest I took in watching this burn, whose changed appearance made me anxious to behold the larger and more formidable water, in whose almost dry bed I had been sitting not an hour and a half before. On reaching the door, a curious spectacle presented itself, the cataract of our little home burn into the loch was no longer worthy of observation, as the entire road between our inn and bridge over the first mentioned stream was covered with water, which was pouring over several acres of land, which lay between the road and the lake on the south side of our inn. As I was going out of the house, I found the female part of the establishment, consisting of the wife and daughter of the landlord, who was absent, as well as a servant and her sister, who had called to visit her, in great perturbation about a fine young calf which was standing half drowned in a byre at a short distance from the house; our first business was to rescue the unfortunate young bull from his situation, the

peril of which was increasing every minute. Ordinary women in the lowlands of England or Scotland would have been at a loss how to act, but the landlord's daughter, a girl of fifteen, but of womanly appearance, and possessing the strength and coolness of a man, soon divested herself of shoes and stockings, while the servant being already without these articles of dress, disposed of the inconvenience of the female drapery, by securing it above her knees, after the manner of Highland laundresses, and dashed into the flooded road. I divested myself of my hose and brogues, leaving my kilt to take care of itself, and away we started to the rescue of the calf, which we could not reach by pursuing the road, as between it and the byre was a hollow piece of ground under cultivation, now covered by a rapid torrent, six feet in depth. We ascended the brae for a little distance by which means we were enabled to reach the byre where we found the calf standing in about three feet of water, which he was afraid to quit, much after the same manner in which a horse fears to leave a burning stable. One of the girls pushed him with a pole on one side of the byre, while with a rope thrown over his head, I dragged him out at the door, and succeeded in saving the terrified beast.

The naval Lieutenant and his brother, already mentioned, had proceeded along the flooded road to the bridge, wading knee deep in the water, and were nearly "in at the death" of a more important animal than a calf, viz. the landlord's brother. Poor Sandy, who had already distinguished himself in rescuing a wheelbarrow, and other less valuable articles from destruction, had waded on

to the bridge, over the burn where I had been sitting in the afternoon. He had not been many minutes contemplating the tremendous torrent before the impetuous burn broke up the arch, through which he immediately descended, and was whirled along till he was close to the lake, when he fortunately saved himself, by seizing the bank in stiller and deeper water.

The force of the water in this burn was so strong as to bear him along upon its surface, without allowing him to sink, in which case he must have been killed by the huge stones which were coming down.

Those only who are acquainted with mountain burns will believe me when I say that, while I beheld the descent of this water, I heard stones beneath knocking each other like sledge hammers; and that on the following day we found heaps of stones piled up in cairns and mounds, composed of fragments of rock, of which many were five and six feet in circumference.

This extraordinary flood, surpassing any ever witnessed by the oldest inhabitant in this quarter, is supposed to have been caused by a water spout, which I have little doubt was the case; inasmuch as no similar effect was produced in any other place at this time, and on the Sugar Loaf, and on Coul Mohr, distant only three miles, not a drop of rain fell, while down the side of the mountains behind us torrents of water descended, ploughing new furrows, unknown before. During the whole time of this heavy descent of rain, a dense sheet of black cloud overspread the sky, casting the darkness of night over every object between the extremity of the lake and the south-

ern horizon, and extending partially towards the east, while towards the north and west not a cloud was to be discerned in the brilliant sky, which brought out clearly the rocky face of the Sugar Loaf, which appeared like glowing copper, in the sun, while a reflection, red as fire, was cast upon the elevated portions of moorland, which stood forward like burning masses against the blackened heavens, while above them floated light clouds wearing the same crimson hue. The effect produced was truly grand, and would form a fine subject for a painter, capable of doing justice to the scene.

This flood subsided as quickly as it had commenced; it had no sooner attained its height than it began to abate, and that so rapidly, that in three hours from its commencement, its recent course could be learned only from the destruction of a large crop of potatoes, the deep furrows along the road, which was strewn in every direction with fragments of a wall, which had been partially demolished, besides the injured bridge, the arch of which had been broken up, so as to cause a large hole reaching half across the road, while the wall itself of the bridge stood unimpaired, spanning the orifice through which poor Sandy had disappeared.

During the last two hours the lake had risen so much, that we were obliged to draw up the boat which had been previously ashore, but which was now beginning to float. We had a second time to haul her still higher up. The lake increased in depth three feet on this occasion; and continued thick and muddy, and unfit for fishing for a week to come.

Poor Sandy, with the assistance of the grass-keeper and his son, whose cottage is situated close beside the bridge, managed to hobble to the inn, where we found that his head had received but little injury, while his legs were very severely bruised. After the manner of Highlanders, having changed his wet garments, he sat down before the fire, and said he was none the worse, but was disappointed in finding his tobacco saturated in his pocket; I supplied him with enough to serve him while his own was drying. Whenever he was asked where he fancied he was going, when he fell through the bridge, his invariable answer was, "Going home, but indeed I was not sure." With some difficulty I prevailed upon him to put his legs into hot water to prevent stiffness as far as possible, and also to take a dose of medicine, with which I supplied him, from stores that provided for myself, in case of an immersion.

Having thus disposed of the injured man, I proceeded, together with the Lieutenant and his brother, to guard against any further accident which might happen to any person attempting to cross the bridge* during the night; by means of a couple of ladders, a wheel barrow,

* The temporary barriers which we erected were permitted to stand for several days, until the arrival of a number of masons, who were engaged for a fortnight in repairing the broken bridge. Fortunately, the accommodation of the small inn had been enlarged a few days before, by the arrival, one morning, of a house upon wheels, which was stationed at the end of the inn. This house was constructed of thin planks and canvas, and, in appearance, resembled those wooden dwellings frequently to be seen at fairs and mountebank-shows. It is used during the summer months by men employed in repairing the roads, and is fitted up with a stove, and other necessaries for cooking and sleeping, which are indispensable in so wild a district, a great portion of which is almost uninhabited.

and two or three poles, we soon erected a sufficient barricade on either side; which operation completed, we returned to our inn to talk over the affair.

CHAPTER XV.

The injured Highlander—Surgical Shepherd—Curious mode of Phlebotomy in the Highlands—Loch Urigil—Black-throated Diver—Gulls—Wild Ducks—Wild Geese—Preaching at Shepherd's Cottage—Highland Bagpipes—Fishing, Loch Urigil—The Singing Shepherd—Loch Borlan—Leaking Boat, stopped in a rude manner—The Cama Loch—Thunder Storm.

AFTER a night's rest, poor Sandy became better aware of his sores and bruises than he was yesterday on going to bed. His legs were considerably swelled, especially about the ankles, which were much inflamed. The inhabitants of this part of the country are still strongly wedded to the practice of phlebotomy, which has gone so much out of fashion of late years. No doubt, in many instances, bleeding proves of essential service amongst these highlanders, who seldom suffer from disease of any kind, and whose robust and hardy frames may occasionally require depletion; and certainly, in the present instance, it was attended with good results. But the manner in which the operation was performed, as well as the attendant circumstances, may be worthy of remark as illustrative of the rude and primitive way in which the surgical art is practised in this remote district.

I have no doubt, that a metropolitan M. D. would have prescribed the application of leeches, which might be found in abundance in two or three of the neighbouring lochs, but much time

would have elapsed ere a capture of these useful creatures could be made.

The landlord, an expert operator with the lancet, was still absent from home; but a shepherd happened to call in for a glass of whisky, and was immediately requested to perform an operation for which he had acquired much celebrity. The landlord's daughter presently informed me, that the shepherd was going to "blood Sandy," and the girl appeared to be quite on the *qui vive* at the thought of the performance about to take place upon her uncle. I went into the kitchen, prepared to offer my assistance (should it be required), in the way of preparing anything for the patient, and also for the purpose of witnessing the operation.

I found Sandy seated upon a chair, discussing the contents of a short black pipe, while his bare legs, divested of shoes and stockings, were placed across two pails of hot water. The shepherd was standing with his lancet in his hand, and having examined the bruises, searched for a vein, which he soon found near the ankle, into which he inserted the instrument with a push that caused his patient to emit a slight Gaelic expression of anger; his pipe, however, was soon replaced in his mouth, while the shepherd proceeded to operate upon the other foot; after which, Sandy returned thanks, and Esculapius wished a speedy recovery to his patient over a gill of whisky. This same shepherd called again early on the Sunday morning, after this transaction, and the landlady being tormented with toothache, his skill was again in requisition.

I knew nothing of his operations on this occa-

sion until some hours afterwards, when I learned that he had bled his patient under the tongue, which was supposed to be a likely mode of relieving that dreadful pain of toothache. It was with much difficulty that the bleeding could be stopped, at which time, an immense loss of blood had taken place, sufficient, I trust, to prevent a similar mode of treatment in future.

The next occasion on which I visited Loch Urigil, I was far better pleased than I had been before, not only on account of better success, but from finding the bottom well adapted to wading, and the trout running larger than those I had taken on the opposite side; and I take this opportunity of advising all anglers fishing this water, without a boat, to commence at the south end of the lake, and to fish carefully along the western shore.

The best fishing lies between this end of the lake, and an island about midway between it, and the other end. The greater portion of the bed of this extent of water consists of a fine smooth gravel, for a considerable distance unincumbered with rocks, which increase in size and number after passing the island, between which and the shore, is a tolerably deep channel, in which, if there be a curl, the angler will find the trout rise freely. This is considered the very best portion of the lake. The angler will need to be cautious on arriving at this spot; the water is shallow for a few yards, when the sand bank suddenly runs down almost perpendicular. Had there been a boat upon the loch, I should have paid a visit to this island, the breeding place of that rare bird, the black-throated diver, as well

as of gulls innumerable, and other varieties of the feathered tribe. On my approach to the point of land which runs out for some distance opposite this island, a deafening chorus of gulls arose, as they swept round and round to take their observations, sometimes coming close to me, while a number of young ones were swimming within thirty yards of me. Two black-throated divers were gliding on the surface of the water, ever and anon disappearing to arise at some other spot. The golden plover announced his presence by his shrill whistle, the cock grouse occasionally crowed, while "quack, quack, quack, quack" attracted my attention every now and then, to a couple or two of wild ducks with their outstretched necks; while, twice to-day, I was warned by their peculiar *trumpeting* sound of a flight of wild geese. On one occasion to-day, as I turned the corner of a promontory, five geese came nearly over my head, within easy shooting distance. The second detachment, consisting of twenty-nine, were flying at a considerable height.

One Sunday, I went over to Strongnubie, six miles distant, to a preaching at a shepherd's cottage. The minister, who came over on the previous night from Loch Inver, officiated in Gaelic and English alternately, that is to say, the prayer was in the Highland tongue, while the psalms and lessons were alternately in Gaelic and English, which was the case, also, with regard to the sermon. Of the first discourse I understood but little, and it consequently appeared to me a very long one: the English one was in reality shorter, but was very plain and edifying, and well suited to those who could under-

stand the southern tongue. Many of those present, especially the older part, who had been extremely attentive to the delivery of the first discourse, sat in perfect ignorance of the latter, at the conclusion of which, all took part in a Gaelic psalm. The cottage, as well as its entry and stairs, were crowded with attendants, and the heat thereby occasioned, in addition to that of a most sultry day, was almost overpowering. I could not help envying those standing at the door, as I sat on the very edge of a narrow bench, pressed forward by those behind me, and tightly wedged on either side. The minister stood behind a deal table, while one of the owners of the boat on Loch Madie acted as clerk beside it.

The day after this, I was engaged to fish at Loch Urigil with Mr. Metcalfe, who was staying at Inchindamph. At nine o'clock, Mr. M——'s approach was announced, by the air of "The Campbells are coming" on the bagpipes, which were remarkably well played by Donald Fraser, lately a piper to the Duke of Sutherland. The music ceased when they reached the house; but they had no sooner alighted from the dog-cart, than the highland instrument again uttered its wild strain, as Donald continued to walk up and down before the house, playing pibrochs and marches, during the time that eggs were boiling, trout frying, and "spread eagles," preparing for breakfast. After discussing this hearty meal, we had a few more airs from the kilted piper, who, leaving his instrument behind him, accompanied us to the boat, before which, the landlord, after the highland custom, offered the morning glass,

which was accepted as a matter of form, although Donald is a very abstemious man; and I have a great objection myself to tasting spirits before dinner, except when mixed with water, or occasionally neat from my pocket-flask, when violently heated and thirsty, or drenched with rain, or benumbed with cold in the course of a day's fishing or shooting.

We commenced fishing to-day at the south end, and proceeding along the western shore, performed the entire circuit of Loch Urigil, and good hard work we found it. The lake is about two miles in length, which, in addition to the rounding of its extremities, and a frequent circuit back from promontories, round bays, and (when on shore) a very fagging walk over peat moss, bogs, and rock, to say nothing of the exertion of fishing, and perpetual wading, amounts to a distance and labour, which will suffice most men requiring a day's exercise. We must not forget the road to and from the lake, which has already been described. In short, fishing round Loch Urigil, without a boat, is a business requiring health, strength, and endurance, and, perhaps what is more than equal to strength, a thorough love of the angler's employment, which feels neither cold, wet, nor fatigue.

There is a burn flowing out of Loch Urigil at the north end (which we had to wade nearly to our waists), in which I took five trout in six casts, averaging above half a pound each. The sum total of our captures to-day, amounted to two hundred and twelve. Early in the season, on a favourable day, we should, in all probability, have had thrice that number.

THE SINGING SHEPHERD.—*Page* 175.

On our return to the inn, we had a repetition of our morning fare, as an evening meal, after which, over a glass of toddy, we had a few more highland tunes on the bagpipe, which, *contrary to custom*, was brought within the house, for which it is far less suited than for the open air. Donald had commenced playing outside the inn after his supper, walking to and fro as in the morning; but Mr. M—— being again about to depart for Inchindamph, we summoned the piper to take a parting glass, after which he played the air, "Happy we' been a' tegither," at the conclusion of which the dog-cart arrived at the door, and speedily took its departure, long after which we heard, in the still and beautiful night, the wild pibroch echoing upon the lake and mountain side.

The next afternoon, at three o'clock, a great character in this part, arrived with a number of sheep, which he was engaged to drive southwards. John M'Lean has the character of being a most careful shepherd, which I believe he fully deserves; John is what may be termed a sober man, being by no means a regular whisky-drinker, indeed he cares little for it, but on certain occasions he can take as much as other men, without being himself the least affected by it, while his companions have either retired to bed, or are exposing themselves to ridicule. Independent, however, of intoxication, John M'Lean is always, and at all times ridiculous—he is a kind of highland Liston; the contortions of his countenance are extremely comic, while his facility in acquiring new airs is extraordinary—his volubility, and his performance of parts, and singing of endless Gaelic songs, is wonderful. The

landlord invited me this evening into the kitchen, to hear some of his songs, and witness his antics, and I was much interested with his performance; he imitated the highland bagpipe wonderfully, and his gestures, and mode of singing, were most truly comic. I regretted that I could not understand the Gaelic sufficiently, to take the same pleasure in the amusement which Menzies and his wife received. This eccentric character is between fifty and sixty years of age, and spends his time almost constantly in singing, which he performs, together with the attendant comic antics, when alone upon a moor, watching his sheep, when travelling by a coach, or tramping the highway.

John M'Lean can never sing with real spirit without having some stick or imitation in his hand, which he uses occasionally to represent a flute or bagpipe, or broadsword, or whatever may be appropriate to the words of his song, in the midst of which he occasionally dances, while when seated, his head and feet are keeping time, and he is himself occasionally almost gasping for breath, at which times he takes a sip of cold water, and without a stop, continues with redoubled energy. This curious man commenced singing on his arrival—sang through the whole night, never going to bed, and on the following morning when I awoke at eight o'clock, I heard him still at his wonted practice. At ten o'clock he started with his sheep, for Oikel Bridge, as fresh as if he had been in bed all night, and wishing all inmates of the house adieu in Gaelic, he took his departure singing, and dancing as on the previous night.

This man, who is married, always commences his eccentricities with renewed vigour whenever his better half is displeased, and I am told awakes to the task occasionally in bed. On one occasion, he informed a neighbour who called at his cottage, that his wife had given birth to a sweet baby, of which he invited her inspection in a cradle hung aloft: the poor woman proceeded to examine the crib of the supposed offspring of the childless pair—the wife being absent at the time—when a whistle from the shepherd brought forth from the cradle a black dog, whose sudden appearance almost frightened the good dame into convulsions.

A medical gentleman whom I met in this district informed me that he was riding through a burn one moonlight night, after visiting a patient, when he beheld a form on the opposite side, assuming the most curious appearance as it went through a number of movements. This gentleman was by no means a superstitious person, and his portly and athletic figure of eighteen stone weight, added to long habitude in nocturnal wanderings, made him ready for defence against human assailants. Accordingly he firmly grasped a heavy stick, ready for attack. On reaching the opposite side of the burn, a loud laugh was uttered as the shepherd's plaid which had recently enveloped his body was thrown off, and the comic gestures and well-known Highland songs proclaimed the strange form to be that of John M'Lean tending his flock.

Soon after M'Lean's departure, I commenced fishing upon Loch Borlan, and secured a good dish of trout. The boat was leaking fearfully, which compelled us to come ashore, to stop the

principal aperture, through which the water was gushing at a great pace. This boat, not two years old, was never water tight, the nails not being properly clinched, and a large hole in her bottom had never been properly repaired; the rude means adopted for stopping this aperture, consisted in the application of a piece of turf, above which a heavy stone was placed. Her increased leaking to-day, was caused by the loss of the original stone, and the substitution of one too light to resist the force of the water. We landed in a bay, where having stuffed the orifice with a fresh piece of turf and a heavier stone, we launched again, and continued fishing till the breeze subsided. I have mentioned the mode adopted of repairing this leaking boat, as an instance of the rude manner in which things are done in this remote district.

I pass over my daily exploits till Mr. Metcalfe again came over from Inchindamph, and induced me to accompany him to the Cama Loch, the situation of which I have already described. This lake is on the whole the most picturesque in this quarter, unless the beautiful Loch Assynt, from its extent and varied scenery, claim the palm. I killed some very fine trout to-day, wading from shore, but my sport soon terminated, the water becoming perfectly calm, after which a tremendous thunder storm succeeded. I took shelter at one of the Elphine cottages, hoping that a breeze would come in the afternoon; I was however disappointed, and Mr. M——, who was on the lake with Donald Fraser, in a very small boat offering accommodation only for two, soon came ashore, having had less sport than myself. We

agreed to return home: on reaching the main road he dropped me from the dog cart, in which he proceeded to Inchindamph; while I took my way on foot to Aultnacalgach, killing forty trout in Loch Borlan as I waded to the inn. The Cama Loch although inferior to Loch Madie affords excellent fishing under favourable circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI.

Shooting—Capture and recapture of another man's property—Loch Ah—Tomb containing Skeleton—Druid Mounds—Halting places for funerals—White Marble at Ledbig—Fall of Loch Urigil Burn—Loch Assynt—Ardvroch Castle—Extraordinary Woman—Salmon in Loch Assynt—Rhiconich—River Dinart—Loch Griam—Loch Merkland—County of Sutherland—Highland Dress—Inns—Lairg Inn—System of the Duke of Sutherland—Poaching—Milk—Roads—Pack-horse—Remains of ancient Forest—Peat Moss affords Fire and Candles—Wolf near Ledbig.

DURING the months of July and August, the lochs frequently remained calm as a mirror during the entire day. I occasionally went out fishing during a heavy rain, and in one or two instances I met with capital sport on Loch Borlan by fishing in a heavy torrent, which in the absence of wind answered the purpose of ruffling the surface of the water. One day after a terrific thunder storm, which continued for four hours with unabated fury, I killed a creel full of fine trout besides a couple of charr, during the heavy rain which continued for some time after the lightning had ceased.

The season was now too far advanced, to expect much sport in the lakes, and a continuance of bright sultry weather, accompanied for a fortnight with thunder, during which period there was scarcely any wind, afforded no inducement to visit the more distant lochs already named; and my fishing had now become rather a matter of necessity than any thing else, and I was al-

ways able to supply myself with fish, for a day's consumption, from Loch Borlan, which was close to the inn.

It would be irksome to the reader, to wade through a recital of my daily fishings in waters already mentioned, and I shall, therefore, quit the subject of angling for the present, and, in a subsequent chapter, offer a few remarks respecting the lakes already described.

This being the first season, for some years, in which I had failed to visit the moors, and to kill grouse betimes on the morning of the 12th, I readily availed myself of the opportunity of bagging a moor cock, which was offered me by the Duke of Sutherland's keeper, who had received orders to supply three brace, &c. It is a tantalizing task to walk across a moor, and to feel oneself restricted to the killing of a certain number of head; at the same time, this afforded an object for a walk, and two hours might have been worse spent, than those in which I bagged three brace of grouse, one hare, and a couple of snipes. Although there was no extraordinary abundance of game on the hill at the back of the inn, still there was a very tolerable number of birds, and I could have made a good bag, had the keeper not been an extremely honest servant, who would by no means allow of the slaughter of more than was required. I was delighted with the man's honest performance of his duty, and felt perfectly satisfied with the amusement which my gun had afforded me.

On my return to the inn, it was too early to betake myself to the confinement of the house; so exchanging my gun for my rod, I stepped into

the boat, and embarked upon Loch Borlan, where I caught a good number of trout, before I returned to my evening meal.

A circumstance, although scarcely worth relating, occurred this evening, which never happened to me before, although I have on several occasions taken fish with a fly or two, and a yard of gut attached, the property of some previous angler. I caught a trout with a fly in his mouth, three or four inches of gut being attached to it; I had three flies on my line, and I now added my captured one as a fourth, which brought the next three fish to my creel, after which a fish took it away again to the depths of the lake. I regretted the loss of this fly, as he was evidently a killer; however, having taken a good view of him, I was enabled to dress his imitation, which I have also endeavoured to commit to paper in my fly sheet, No. 7. I had passed the greater portion of a sultry day in dressing flies, when a very strong breeze sprang up in the evening, which induced me to pay a visit to Loch Ah, where I killed a number of splendid trout.

On my return, the Duke's keeper, who had performed the office of rowman in the Norwegian boat, upon the lake, directed my attention to a tomb, which I had frequently passed without observing, and which would escape the notice of any person to whom it was not pointed out, although it is situated but a few yards from the road side, about half a mile south-east of Loch Ah. This rude monument of antiquity consists of four upright stones, which are imbedded deeply in the peat moss, and are covered by one stone, lying horizontally. On looking through the apertures, I

discerned the great part of a human skeleton, the skull of which lies divided into two portions; from the size of the bones, I am inclined to believe that they are the remains of a female. This interesting burial-place was discovered by accident, about five-and-twenty years ago, when the enclosed remains presented the same appearance as they do at the present time. It is supposed to have been an interment during the time of the Picts, who were accustomed to bury their bodies in this kind of rude stone coffin. The appearance of these stones from the road side, is by no means remarkable, resembling hundreds of rude masses of rock, which are scattered over this moorland district.

On paying a second visit to this tomb, in order to examine it more carefully, in the immediate vicinity I observed a mound, evidently artificial, and exactly resembling those beside the River Nairn, but wanting the enormous upright stones surrounding the Clava Chapels, although there are one or two upright masses of rock, though of much smaller dimensions, which I have little doubt were erected by the Druids. There are numerous similar mounds in this neighbourhood, one on the very edge of Loch Borlan, and several more in the vicinity of Aultnacalgach, and Loch Bhallan. There is one of considerable circumference on the hill immediately behind the inn, which during my stay I repeatedly visited, and I have no doubt, if the loose stones were removed, a regular oven-form, similar to that of the Clava Chapels, would be discovered, containing, in all probability, an urn, filled with the bones of victims of sacrifice. As the Duke of Sutherland

turns his attention to modern improvement, (which has made the good inns and excellent roads in this county) rather than to antiquarian researches and excavations, it is probable that the mounds, to which I have alluded, may long remain unexplored.

In the immediate vicinity of Ledbig, on the east side of the burn, are numbers of small hillocks, bespeaking the resting-place of mortal beings, which in this wild country, only a few years ago, were buried, as necessity required, in any part of the moorland, near the place of their decease. The corpse is now generally carried to a distance, to be deposited in some spot of ground selected for the purpose of burial, cairns being erected near the road, on the hill side, marking the spot at which the attendants of the funeral should halt. At these places the coffin is placed on the ground, and those composing the funeral procession rest and refresh themselves with whatever they carry with them.

The rocks in the immediate vicinity of Ledbig consist of beautiful white marble, which was worked some time back.

I have frequently killed a dish of trout in the burn, near its junction with that descending from Loch Urigil, which makes a beautiful fall before running into the Cama Loch, which, although of no great height, will repay a visit to the lover of the picturesque. The scenery on the Cama Loch is very beautiful, and I have had many a good day's sport upon its waters.

It was a lovely day, and having determined to take my departure on the morrow, I availed myself of the useful "Blackey" and dog-cart offered me

by the landlord, who accompanied me to Inchindamph, not for the purpose of fishing, but of visiting the ruins of Ardvroch Castle, in which the Earl of Montrose was taken prisoner. This district was at that time in the possession of the Clan Macleod, Ardvroch Castle being the residence and stronghold of the Laird of Assynt; whose wife, during her husband's absence from home, ordered the capture of the Earl, much to the sorrow and vexation of the Laird, who would himself have used every exertion to screen and conceal him.

The castle, which stands upon a promontory jutting out into the lake, is in perfect ruins. Outside its walls, two cannons are lying imbedded several inches in the ground. Menzies here related to me an extraordinary instance of female strength. He knew a woman who raised one of those guns on end from the ground and turned it over. Menzies himself is a very strong man, yet he could scarcely raise it a foot from the earth, while three or four inches were all that I could accomplish. The landlord, in addition to his strength, combined a certain knack of raising weights, which he had acquired years ago, when working as a mason. If a powerful man of fifteen stone could only elevate this gun a foot, what Herculean power must the Highland woman have possessed! I believe this extraordinary person is still living.

Loch Assynt is a very beautiful lake, and like Loch Ness it never freezes, owing to its great depth. This lake is inferior to those already mentioned for fly-fishing, but is considered the best for trolling for the great lake trout. The salmon

and grilse in this loch are frequently taken with fly off shore. They also rise very well in a burn, between this lake and Loch Ah, on reaching which they very rarely rise to the fly—they are, however, occasionally taken there. Loch Assynt is eight miles long. I much regretted that my protracted stay at Aultnacalgach, together with other circumstances, prevented my proceeding further north, especially as I obtained permission from Mr. M'Ivor, one of the Duke's factors, to fish two most excellent lochs, close to Rhiconich, near Durness.

I intended going to Rhiconich, but was recalled southwards. These two lochs, which I had hoped to fish, are second only to Loch Stack, the best in Sutherland, but reserved for the sole fishing of Lord Grosvenor, the Duke's son-in-law. There is also a river, having but a very short run between these lochs and Durness, which, when rather flooded, affords excellent salmon fishing; being unlet this season, Mr. M'Ivor very kindly offered me a week's angling in this water. I waited for rain to put this river in order, but it was so long in coming, that I was obliged to wend my way homewards, without casting a fly on its waters.

The name of this river is the Dinart, or Grugy. I had also obtained permission, while at Tain, from Mr. Gunn, another of the Duke's factors, to fish Loch Griam and Loch Merkland, north of Loch Shin, towards Loch More. The fishing in these lakes, I am informed, is excellent; but I cannot speak from experience, having missed them altogether, by taking a more westerly course for the district of Assynt.

Before I take my departure from Sutherland, I

must make a few brief remarks upon the peculiarities of the county and its inhabitants.

The county of Sutherland, comprising an extent of about one thousand eight hundred and twenty square miles, has only a very small portion under tillage, while the remaining portion is moorland. The inhabitants are remarkably kind and hospitable; their language is Gaelic, but the generality of the younger portion speak English, in which they express themselves remarkably well, and preserve a due attention to grammar; while the older portion, especially the women, speak only Gaelic, or, to use perhaps the only English sentence they can utter—"We have plenty of Gaelic, but no English."

The Highland dress is seldom seen amongst the lower orders, who have never resumed the kilt since it was denounced after the battle of Culloden, before which it was the universal costume, and is still held in such high estimation, that on several occasions I met with extra kindness and civility, from my appearance in the Highland garb, when a parent uttered in Gaelic to his son, words, meaning in English—"Be kind, and show the best fishing places to the man in the kilt, and take care of him, and bring him back in safety."

The inns in this county are generally small, but afford an excellent supply of edibles. The Lairg inn is considered the best, and certainly the accommodation is excellent, and the landlord is a very civil man; although I confess I was not sufficiently pleased with him, when, in his extreme kindness, he came into the room, and informed me that it was "late, and time to go to

bed." I only staid two nights here, so it was of little consequence; had I stopped longer I should have stipulated for my own time of going to sleep. There is a private house attached to this inn, in which, when the Duke is *not* in the county, the landlord has permission to accommodate visitors with beds, but they cannot remain in the house during the day.

The charges at all the inns in Sutherland are moderate, owing to the excellent system adopted by the Duke, to whom the whole county, with the exception of a few small portions, belongs. The inns having been originally built by his Grace, are occupied free of expense by those who are considered respectable tenants of a portion of land which they rent on very moderate terms. If the charges at the inns are complained of as being exorbitant, they are immediately curtailed by the Duke, through his factor, who acts in his name. This excellent system is carried out in every matter.

There is scarcely any poaching in this county; indeed, the Duke's keeper informed me that there was no necessity for night watching. The Duke never wishes to bring a man to trial for killing game; all persons in the county know that for the *first* offence they and their families must quit the locality, or to use the current expression of the county, "take to their heels."

Milk has never been tasted in perfection by those who have not visited this portion of Britain, where the only fault that can be raised against it is that it is far too rich for a draught, which is constantly offered to one at any cottage one may

enter. It is more than *cream*, it has the consistency almost of *butter*.

The roads in Sutherland which are free of toll are only twelve feet in width, including a foot of green-sward on each side.

Waggons such as those used in the southern counties of England, are, of course, unknown here, as they are in the northern counties of England. Whenever two small carts meet, one is compelled to draw on to the sloping green-sward, and to remain stationary while the other passes. A frequent mode of the conveyance of baggage, especially merchandize, is by a pack horse, a man walking beside him. The manner in which the rude pack-saddle, which, however, answers the purpose extremely well, is put upon the horse's back, and retained in its position, is both primitive and ingenious. The saddle which is formed of wood, has an arch behind, which is cleft in two, a portion of wood being removed forms a kind of hook on each side, from each of which is suspended a large sack, or bag, containing the goods; an old plaid or two placed on the beast's back, under the saddle, prevents galling. A couple of holes are bored on each side of the wooden saddle, through which ropes are passed, and tied underneath the belly of the horse, the ends are prevented from slipping through the holes of the saddle by knots. Thus the plaids form a horse cloth, and the ropes a roller, which are well suited to the purpose, although they would appear strange in a Newport Pagnel, or Melton Mowbray stable. The remaining portion of the harness is of equally rude construction. The head-stall or bridle, is formed of wicker, while the same substance being attached

to the back of the saddle secures it to the ends of a stick, which is placed under the horse's tail, thus forming a cheap and curious crupper.

In this almost treeless district, in every peat cutting are to be found innumerable remains of the forest which formerly covered its surface. These remains of withered wood are not without their use. While the decayed matter has formed a most excellent peat, which affords a cheerful and blazing fire to the present inhabitants of the country, the remains of dried wood supplies them with light during the winter months, while the clear nights of summer require no artificial means of illumination. The peasantry of this district form candles of these dry remains of the ancient forest, which only require splitting, and on being cut into a point, light as readily as paper, and continue to burn into the socket of a candlestick, formed of a piece of peat.

A great portion of the wood originally extending over this district was destroyed by fire.

About two centuries ago a Highlander having parted with his weapon of defence, by lending his dirk to a friend, was attacked and killed by a wolf half-an-hour afterwards, when only a few hundred yards from Ledbig.

The present house, although now wearing a modern appearance, is a very old one. In this brief account of Sutherland, I make no mention of the peculiar mode of Highland fox-hunting, or of the variety of birds, &c., to be found here, as this has already been too well described by that keen and experienced sportsman, and close observer of the habits of animals, St. John, to require any remarks from me. It was after perusing

his tour in Sutherland, in which I found that his object was that of collecting the eggs, and obtaining specimens of rare birds, rather than of fishing its lakes, that I ventured to make a few remarks upon its waters, to which he has only alluded in a cursory way. I shall now conclude this chapter, and proceed to give a few hints in the commencement of the next, as to the flies to be used on these lakes, the best portions to fish, the merits and demerits of the fish they contain respectively, and the average size, &c., of the fish.

CHAPTER XVII

Flies, and materials for dressing them—Best Fishing Grounds—Lochs producing the best Trout—Trolling—Departure from Aultnacalgach—Journey to Ullapool—Good Fishing Loch—Scenery—Stack Mountain—Loch Broom—Ullapool—Departure from Ullapool—Little Loch Broom - The Yacht—The Doctor—The Little Boat—Departure from Little Loch Broom.

WITH regard to the flies to be used upon these lochs, I have no hesitation in saying, as far as my own experience goes, that red or yellow bodies will carry the day against all other colours, although a dark green body succeeded well in its captures on several occasions. "Pig's down" is the best material for the body of a fly, as being less subject to the soaking effects of the water than others, and every angler will do well to have a supply of this material of various colours, wherever he may bend his steps, especially in wild districts like Assynt, where he cannot obtain such an article prepared, and where, indeed, I never saw the animal from which it is obtained. The angler, however, need not despair of success in this quarter if his stock be but small, and if, as occurred to myself, his quantum of lake flies run out, provided he have some *good hooks*. I ran aground with respect to this last-mentioned article, and after waiting for a week, I received a supply of extremely bad ones from Golspie: I had several excellent undressed hooks, but they were not

of the proper size, being either too small for trout-fishing in lakes, or of a size suited for salmon.

If the angler be not well supplied with material for bodies of flies, I recommend him to examine the colours of his plaid or bonnet, if he wear such articles, if not, let him view all woollen things with a keen eye; if he be married, and accompanied by his better-half, in all probability he may content himself with a small portion of the fringe of his wife's shawl, or any other garment of which coloured wool forms a portion; I dressed some of my best killing flies with bodies supplied by my highland stockings and plaid, varying my assortment occasionally by a slight robbery upon the carpet, for which I had permission from the landlord.

The bodies of all flies for these lochs should be warped with gold or silver twist, an article with which the angler must come ready supplied, being as impossible to obtain as gimp, which last mentioned article, however, is superfluous in this part of the country, as I believe the pike is unknown in the County of Sutherland, except in one lake, in which it has been recently introduced. We have thus dispensed with the body of the fly, the wings of which are best supplied by the various shades of feathers from the turkey, grouse, and mallard, the latter being the most difficult to obtain, and perhaps the least needed, although when attached to a dark green body, warped with silver twist, and a black hackle, I found it to be a killing fly (see fly sheet No. 3.) Flies with gutta percha wings have done great execution in these lakes; but I never use them, as they soon go to

pieces, the wings having no endurance for real work.

There is no necessity for fine gut in these lakes, indeed on most occasions strength of material is rather required. Roughly-dressed flies are the most killing dainties. A tolerable amount of hackle is attractive to the trout of these lakes.

The most taking colour for the body of flies for Loch Ah, is a kind of light puce, warped with silver twist (a portrait of this fly will be found in the fly sheet No. 6) red and yellow bodies also kill well in this lake. The gillaroos in Loch Mulach Corrie are pleased with tinsel and glitter, appended to gay-coloured bodies.

Now with regard to the best portions of these lakes for fishing.—In Loch Borlan the largest trout lie on the western side, which is also the case in Loch Urigil; in both instances the fish appear to rise more keenly off this shore, which is caused in all probability by their being more numerous. In Loch Bhallan and Loch Mulach Corrie, the eastern shore is considered the best, as affording the most suitable ground for the resort of large fish, the largest trout, however, in the last-mentioned lake can scarcely be taken without a boat. In Loch Madie, Loch Ah, Loch Assynt, and the Cama Loch, no particular spot can be named as affording a better chance of success than another; there is good fishing in every portion of their waters, while, as I have already stated, the west end of Loch Madie, which is shallow, affords the best fishing; while those who are fortunate enough to reach the Fuin Loch, will be well repaid for their trouble.

The largest and finest trout to be taken with fly in these waters, are the gillaroos of Loch Mulach Corrie; next to which, both in point of size and beauty of form, we should place the trout of Loch Ah, which generally cut rather pink in the flesh, and are of good flavour. The fish in Loch Madie, the Cama Loch, and Loch Urigil, generally run very even in point of size; while those of the last-mentioned lake are of a very beautiful shape and flavour. The trout of Loch Bhallan appear generally to be of a good size, while their shape and colour are totally different to those of the other lakes. Loch Borlan produces trout of all sizes; but those taken with fly are generally smaller than the fish caught in the lakes already mentioned, and have, for the most part, a white and soft flesh, although I occasionally caught some remarkably fine trout in this loch, one of which was quite a curiosity on account of the colour of his flesh, which was almost equal to that of a salmon, his flavour being little inferior in point of richness.

The angler must not expect to take very large trout with fly in these lakes. I kept an accurate return of the number and weight of each day's captures, which regularly averaged three to the pound in Loch Ah, four to the pound in the other lakes, except Loch Mulach Corrie, where they were from half a pound to three-quarters of a pound each, and Loch Borlan, where five to the pound formed the exact weight of the fish taken.

Those who wish to take large and heavy fish in the Scotch lakes, must, in a great measure,

abandon* fly fishing for trolling, by which means they will sometimes capture trout of immense size, as heavy as nineteen pounds; but they will in all probability be wholly unsuccessful for days together. For my own part I can seldom abandon the fly for any other mode of angling; and although the tremendous struggles of the great lake trout afford sport of the most exciting description, at the same time captures are not only comparatively rare, but they also proceed from no skill on the part of the angler, who is perhaps leisurely sitting in the boat as it is propelled by the rower, an immense length of line trailing behind it, at the end of which a small trout attached to half-a-dozen hooks, spins round and round, in hope of attracting the attention of a monster, who no sooner hooks himself, than the idle angler grasps the rod, strong as a weaver's beam, and commences a fight with the fish, the strength of tackle allowing him to calculate the prize won, provided the indignant trout do not break his hold. I must now terminate my remarks upon this delightful district, which I quitted with feelings of reluctance, whose lakes and mountains had endeared themselves to me as familiar friends, whom I felt I was leaving, perhaps for ever.

A lovely day smiled upon my departure for Ullapool, which I reached at about seven o'clock in the evening. The kind and hospitable landlord, had determined to put me a day's journey

* There are several lakes in Rossshire in which large trout are to be taken with fly. In Perthshire, also, there is one lake especially celebrated for the size and quality of its trout. The trout of Loch Tummel are the finest I ever caught; they are to be taken of weights varying from one to ten pounds, the average being about two. The smallest I ever killed in this loch was a pound and a half. These fish are of beautiful symmetry, of flavour almost equal to salmon, while the internal colour of their flesh is almost vermillion.

on my road, in the dog-cart, free of expence, undertaking to drive me twenty-five miles in any direction I pleased. We had not proceeded above half-a-mile, when the breeching of the rotten harness broke, and "Blackey" proceeded for a couple of hundred yards in a gallop beside Loch Borlan: he was soon checked, however, in his pace, by a few words from his master. A little string and the leather strap of my creel soon enabled me to repair the broken breeching, and we arrived at Ullapool without another fracture.

On reaching Elphine a busy scene presented itself; the small allotment grounds, swarmed with men and women busily employed in cutting corn, which had ripened to perfection under the bright sun which had been shining for some time with all its burning power. Shortly after leaving this curious little town, a series of innumerable small lochs burst upon our view. Several of these lakes were close beside the road, which has only existed for about two years.

One of these lakes is called the "Lake of Swords," as it is supposed to be the water into which the M'Kenzies after a defeat threw their swords, to prevent their becoming the property of the rival Clan. All these lakes contain an abundance of fish; there is one called Loch Lunginn of considerable dimensions, at some distance from the road, in the direction of Loch Stack, in which the angling is I believe superior to that of the lakes already mentioned, but there is no boat upon it, nor any house or accommodation near it, which inconvenience will be in a great measure removed in all probability next spring, by which time it is the intention of Menzies to have a

small boat completed, and mounted upon a carriage for the purpose of conveying anglers staying at his inn, to this and other lochs in the neighbourhood. The boat will be enabled to proceed on wheels for a distance of six or seven miles from Aultnacalgach, when being shifted from its carriage, it can be conveyed by two or three men across the Muir to the lake in question, and after floating several hours upon its waters, may easily return the same evening. This boat, which is building by the landlord himself, and was on the stocks during my stay at his house, will be of such light construction, as to be capable of conveyance by two men, over the peat moss to Loch Urigil.

The scenery through which we passed to-day, was wild and magnificent in the extreme, an endless succession of mountains of the most abrupt and fantastic forms rose in every direction, one of which called Stack, presented a most singular appearance, as his summit, resembling the head and cap of an old man, seemed to peer round upon us with caution, from behind another mountain, gradually shewing more and more of himself, until after proceeding a short distance, we beheld the whole of his gigantic form standing forward with an air of proud defiance. Shortly before we arrived at Ullapool we entered a defile of extremely grand and imposing appearance, the sides being composed of rocks of considerable height, while the sides of the road presented enormous masses which had been detached at various periods and lay piled and scattered in all directions, presenting a solemn and rude chaos. Through this pass which extends for a distance of about three miles, the

more superstitious of the inhabitants of the country have an objection to pass at night or in the sombre shade of evening, as it is supposed to be haunted by innumerable supernatural beings, who perform their wanderings and enchantments amongst the wild and rugged stones which form their habitations. On issuing from this rocky glen the road winds in a steep and fearful descent beside an unprotected precipice, at the foot of which lies the salt-water lake called Loch Broom, whose opposite side consists of a very high rock, arising as perpendicular as a wall, from the sea below. A multitude of gulls and wild birds were soaring over its summit, and sweeping down its face to feed their young—numbers of boats were going out to their fishing stations, beyond which in the distance we could plainly discern the Islands of Harris and Lewis.

Ullapool, which is one of the British Society's Fishing Stations, is a small town or rather village, consisting of one small street, containing a few shops, in which however, more than the necessaries of life may be obtained. It is beautifully situated on Little Loch Broom, a salt-water lake formed by a further inlet of the sea up a narrow channel. We obtained very comfortable quarters at the inn, which affords excellent sleeping apartments; the breakfast was, however, inferior to those to which I had lately been accustomed. It was my intention to proceed on foot from Ullapool along the west coast to the wild district of Applecross—to visit the Falls of Glomak, the highest in Britain, and to cross the ferry to the Isle of Skye—to return by Tormandown and Invergarry to Loch, Oich, and to proceed from

thence to Perth, by the road on the opposite side of the lake. On making inquiries, however, as to the mode of proceeding along the western coast, I found it so fraught with difficulties, owing to the circuitous course which I should be compelled to take, the large tract of country over which I must pass having no road whatever for many miles, and the vast time which I should expend in the undertaking, that I at length with much reluctance, determined to abandon my intention, and to pursue my way homewards by a shorter and more direct route.

Dr. M'Kenzie, to whom I have already alluded as meeting the singing shepherd by night beside a burn, resides at Ullapool, and hearing of my arrival, very kindly called upon me just as I was concluding my breakfast, and pressed me to postpone my departure till the following day, offering me an agreeable sail in a yacht, the property of a friend of his, then lying off the shore. This was a strong temptation to defer my journey, especially as he represented to me the discomfort I should experience at the inn of Clashcarnoch, where I purposed halting for the night. He described this house, twenty-one miles distant from Ullapool, as being such a miserable tenement, that although in a heavy snow-storm he might gladly avail himself of its shelter for the night, he should sit beside the peat fire in preference to going to bed. Time was pressing me on one hand and the Doctor on the other, and I confess I thought the highland kindness and friendship of the latter might in some measure exaggerate the discomfort of the inn to which I was bound. I was obdurate to all his entreaties to

remain at Ullapool another night, whereupon the Doctor kindly offered to set me on my road six miles, being the utmost distance the lake would allow the yacht to carry me. I need scarcely say that I most readily availed myself of his kindness.

In half an-hour I stepped into a boat, which four sturdy rowers soon brought alongside the beautiful little craft. In a few minutes the anchor was weighed, her sails were set, and we were skimming before a moderate wind at eight knots an hour. Never did I experience greater pleasure than that afforded me this morning, to which the discomfort of the night formed a terrible contrast.

The day was clear and bright, the wind was in our favour, the two sailors on board were patterns of men, intelligent, active, and clever, while their cleanliness and neatness of appearance rivalled their open and happy countenances, and their courteous and kind behaviour would grace men of the highest class. The "Big Doctor," as he is appropriately termed, seemed to enjoy himself thoroughly, while he did all he could to administer to the comfort and enjoyment of others. I am sure should this page ever be perused by the worthy Doctor, that he will not be offended at an epithet which he himself informed me was always applied to him, more especially when I tell him that I like "big" animals of all kinds. A "big" dog is a far nobler and less snappish specimen of his species than the miserable creature that sleeps on the lap of its mistress. The same remark I have every reason to believe is applicable to the human race.

The yacht which was wafting us rapidly towards the head of the loch, was built entirely of iron, her deck being composed of the same metal. She was constructed upon an excellent principle, which permitted the entrance to the cabin to be entirely closed down so as to exclude the possibility of her shipping any water, even in the roughest sea. In the meantime she could be steered, and her sails shifted from below, the sailors being snugly housed under her deck. This vessel had lately come from Aberdeen, to await the arrival of her owner, who was expected this evening. She had now performed her nineteenth passage through the Pentland Firth; on several occasions the tremendous surf was washing over her deck, while the tight little craft was urging her course under water. She is considered to be the safest boat and the fastest sailor of her size in Scotland. She had an ample supply of provisions on board, which were stowed away in the smallest compass. When we had proceeded about two miles from Ullapool, the kind Doctor ordered one of the men to produce some luncheon. In a few seconds an excellent cheese made its appearance, together with bread and biscuits, bitter ale and porter, to which was added a supply of excellent rum and whisky, cold spring water and hot, for a glass of grog or toddy.

M'Kenzie had a good voice, and an inexhaustible number of songs, which he sung with excellent feeling. In the midst of the song, "Ye Mariners of England," which the Doctor sings remarkably well, we had reached the furthest point to which the yacht could proceed, nearly to the head of the loch. We were enjoying ourselves so thoroughly

that we determined to lie off shore for a short time. The sails were so set, that without using an anchor we remained almost stationary; tacking across to the opposite side of the loch as soon as we found our vessel making too near an approach to shore. The song was finished, and several others, ere we had returned to the same spot, where we again lay off shore. The sun was still shining brightly, but the day was wearing on, and I was compelled to leave the Doctor and the little vessel with considerable reluctance.

After wishing "the Big Doctor," a hearty adieu, I stepped into the little boat, attached to the yacht, which was only used for going ashore with a message, and whose tiny dimensions would hardly accommodate two persons. Again and again had the Doctor inquired whether the boat would ensure a safe transport of the rower and myself. The distance was not above five hundred yards, but the breeze had increased, and what was nearly "a calm" to the yacht, was "a heavy sea" to the nut-shell.

This little boat was so small, that I believe one man might carry her, while she offered such a cramped accommodation, that the rower had his knees in close proximity with his chin, while a slight movement of my leg nearly caused her to ship water. The waves which we had beheld with contempt in the yacht, now appeared ready to swamp us, as they rose three times higher than our boat which, however, rose upon their summits, and conveyed us to shore in safety. It was with difficulty that I could induce the rower to accept a very trifling remuneration, which he said was quite unnecessary, but which I prevailed

upon him to take, to purchase a pipe of tobacco for himself and comrade on board the yacht, to rejoin which he now embarked again in the nutshell. I stood for a short time watching his progress over the waves, until he regained the vessel, which immediately commenced her return to Ullapool.

I returned the hearty adieus which were waved to me from the yacht, making a hasty sketch of the scene which I was about to leave. I strapped my knapsack on my shoulders, and commenced my fifteen miles journey, for which I was well prepared as far as provisions were concerned, while they added a burden too awkward and cumbrous to be carried far. I had a small flask in my pocket containing a gill of whisky, which is a sufficient quantum of spirit, to be mixed occasionally with spring water, and a very necessary article for the pedestrian.

The Doctor, however, insisted upon my taking a small loaf of bread and a huge piece of cheese, together with two bottles of bitter ale, which, notwithstanding my refusal, on account of their weight, he crammed into the pockets of my jacket as I quitted the vessel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pedestrian Journey—"The Ugly Burn"—"The Dirie More"—River Blackwater—Deceptive light—Clashcarnoch Inn—Rude approach to the house—Abundance of provisions—The Kitchen—Partial occupancy of a Room discovered—Preparation of my Bed—Bed in a Cheese-room—Tooth-ache—Arrival of Fishermen—I leave the Cheese-room for the Kitchen—Restless Bairn—Landlady a subject for an Artist—Fishermen's Departure—Hasty Toilet in the Cheese-room—Departure for Garve.

It was three o'clock when I left the shores of Little Loch Broom. I proceeded at a steady pace for about three miles, when finding the bottles heavy, and the heat oppressive, I sat down for a short time to partake of a second edition of bread and cheese, and to quench my thirst with the welcome contents of the bottles, of whose weight I riddled myself by throwing them into the burn, below, which flows into the loch. Houses are scattered here and there for the first few miles; after which a dreary and treeless moorland presents itself, called the Dirie More, to which I was introduced by a long and steep ascent.

The road I traversed to-day passed through a country too monotonous in its exhibition of rock and peat moss, to merit remark upon its scenery; with the single exception of one magnificent picture, afforded by what is called "The Ugly Burn," which flows on the right, and at one point forms a deep black pool, which it is almost

fearful to behold from the road above. The sides of the burn here are almost perpendicular, of very great height, and composed of rock, well covered with dwarf wood to their base. The falls of Rogie and Kilmorack, and many other objects described in guide books as peculiarly interesting are much overrated, and are excelled a hundred-fold by "The Ugly Burn," at this point. Time was hurrying on, and I could not stop to make a sketch; so after a few moments survey of this grand abyss, I pressed onward. At a distance of two miles further I inquired of a man the distance to Clashcarnoch.

He could give me no accurate information, but he told me that I had a long and dreary road to traverse. He had walked from a house far beyond it, and intended proceeding to the head of Little Loch Broom to-night. He exhibited every symptom of fatigue, as he walked with his shoes slung over his back, which he had taken off to ease his feet, while, as he told me, he felt thoroughly exhausted, and thought his limbs would soon give way beneath his body. I had already taken a thimble-full of whisky, and I knew not how long my pocket-flask might be required to contribute to my own wants, so I could only offer a tasting to this "wayworn traveller" who accepted the modicum with many thanks.

I continued to wend my way amongst rocks, mountains, and peat moss, ever and anon casting my eye at some huge stone or hollow, which might, in case of need, afford me shelter for the night, thinking that my knapsack would serve as a pillow, while my thick plaid would give me a blanket; I had a few matches in my "sporran,"

of the party, who were sleeping in the apartment adjoining the kitchen.

I would on no account permit these poor fellows to be disturbed from their slumbers, after a severe and long day's tramp, on their road from Caithness to Ullapool, which place they were to reach on the morrow.

The poor landlady, who was a stout and well-looking woman, and the very essence of kindness and good nature, appeared to be as anxious as her husband that I should go to bed; and having, with a smile on her countenance, addressed him in Gaelic, she immediately unlocked a large chest, from which she took several clean blankets (almost new), and hurried out of the room.

In a short time, the host came in to announce that a room was prepared for me; which, although not so large as that which I was now occupying, contained the best bed in the house, and that I should find myself very comfortable.

He answered for the cleanliness of the bedding —and I had no reason to doubt the truth of his assertion; every thing was, I believe, well aired into the bargain. Alas! a clean and dry bed alone would not ensure the comfort which had been promised me.

In order to convey to the reader some idea of my sleeping apartment, I must inform him, that it was a cheese room, the articles of furniture consisting of what is well known in the North of England as "a box bed," a clock known also as "a wag at the wall," besides two empty casks, several pans of milk, and a number of cheeses ranged upon wooden forms. The floor was rudely paved with stones, whose clefts and fissures con-

me a night's rest from which I should have never awoke in this world. The light I was following was that of the gamekeeper's cottage, on the opposite side of the river. I made my way back to the road as quickly as I could in the darkness, over the rough and broken ground. After proceeding a few yards, I could discern another light, apparently close to me, on the right hand side of the road. Nothing can be more deceptive in its appearance, than a light in a dark, especially a misty or foggy night.

I proceeded for a considerable distance, without making any perceptible approach to what I hoped was the inn. It was now eight o'clock; it was raining heavily, and I thought, if I were now following a "will-o'-the-wisp," I was by no means in an enviable position. In a few minutes, however, I was really in close proximity to Clashcarnoch, which is situated at a distance of only a few yards from the road side. I was puzzled, however, in the darkness, to find my way, which could not be wondered at, as the main approach was up the bed of a small burn. Along this footpath I was recommended by the host and another man, who appeared with lanterns, to "take time," as the road was *no* very good, "and in the dark, the large stones were *no canny*." I had stood for above ten minutes on the road, shouting lustily, but was only answered by a barking dog, which, in a few minutes more, was succeeded by the appearance of the two men, who conducted me to my night's quarters.

I was ushered into an apartment (a kind of kitchen without a fire place), whose furniture consisted of a bedstead, a wooden form, one chair,

a small table, and a large barrel of herrings. Rafters, here and there, served the purpose of a ceiling, while the sides of the room were composed of similar materials, rather more closely compacted, but still admitting a free ventilation through the numerous clefts and crevices. The walls and roof presented the same hue, for which they were indebted to peat smoke. Two lambs, which had taken shelter from the rain, accompanied by sundry chickens, occupied the room previous to our entrance, and remained undisturbed by our presence. The landlord, whose manner and appearance were somewhat singular, stood for a few minutes in silence, and after gazing at me in apparent astonishment, ventured to express his opinion that I might possibly be wet, and require some food, to which I replied in the affirmative; and on asking him what I could have, I was not myself a little surprised at his answer—"You can have anything you please, sir: mutton, beef, chicken, herrings, oatmeal and loaf bread, and plenty of butter, cream, eggs, tea, and coffee."

The announcement of this "bill of fare" convinced me that there was no immediate fear of starvation, which was a great comfort, but would have been far surpassed by a comfortable bed, &c. This strange host expressed his regret, that some gentlemen were dining in the best room, but that he was sure they would leave it soon after their repast, and that I should find myself very comfortable in its possession. In the mean time, being very thirsty, I asked for a gill of whiskey, with part of which I qualified the spring water, and gave the remainder to the

landlord, who, after the real highland fashion, eschewing adulteration, took it as a dram. I was becoming very cold in this fireless apartment, as I sat awaiting the departure of the occupants of the "best room," and soon made my way to the adjoining kitchen, where some excellent peat served to warm me, while it threw a light upon the forms and countenances of a girl sitting beside it, and the active landlady, who was busily engaged in her housewifery, whilst five bairns, who were occasionally chided for rudeness, were playing in a bed before going to sleep. None of the inmates of the kitchen, at the present moment, except myself, could speak English, which was, therefore, a useless language. I made the best use I could of the little Gaelic with which I was acquainted, which served me tolerably well until the landlord entered, who interpreted my English to his wife, a most willing person, and desirous of making every preparation for my comfort as far as the means of the house permitted. The tenants of the "best room" soon came into the kitchen, and I was then informed that I could take possession of the vacated apartment, to which I shortly proceeded.

This room presented a most miserable appearance; it was of considerable dimensions, containing two beds and a fire-place, while, in other respects, it resembled the first I had entered, with the exception that there were no lambs nor chickens parading its floor, whilst the windows, containing but few panes of glass, admitted the same free current of air, unwarmed, however, by a neighbouring kitchen. At my request, a fire was immediately supplied, and shortly extin-

guished, as I preferred cold to the smoke which it occasioned, to dispel which was impossible. As I sat waiting for my tea, and ruminating upon my situation, a loud snore proclaimed the room to be still partially occupied, while a similar strain, but in a different key, announced the double tenancy of one of the beds. As the reader may imagine, I turned round, and beheld two lowland bonnets and other articles of man's apparel, thrown carelessly beside the bed of the heavy sleepers. In a few minutes, my evening meal made its appearance, consisting of tea and fresh eggs, a cold chicken, a couple of herrings, and an ample supply of excellent bread, cream, and butter. The accompaniments of my supper were but little inferior to the viands. The table cloth was of a snowy whiteness, while the knives, forks, spoons and crockery, were as clean as a nobleman could wish them. I put my plaid about me, and did ample justice to what was set before me, ever and anon turning round, as some extraordinary note from behind the closely drawn bed curtains induced me to think that one of the deep sleepers might possibly be in pain. The noise, however, proceeded only from the nasal organs of two Caithness fishermen, who were making up for a day's hard fatigue in a sound and comfortable snooze, from which, nothing short of satiety could awake them.

In a short time the landlord again made his appearance, and told me that he hoped I should find every thing comfortable, and supposed I should be glad to retire to rest. I confess, that had I been in the neighbourhood of any large town, or in many of the southern counties of

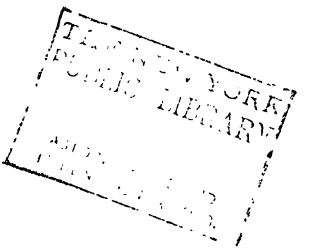
England or Scotland, I should have insisted on sitting up for the night; as, in a lonely house, such as I now inhabited, surrounded by men, of whose calling and character I knew nothing, watchfulness was far safer than sleep.

One has a totally different feeling in these remote Highlands, where men and manners are more primitive, especially in *vice*. I should have had little hesitation in occupying the vacant bed, as far as danger was concerned, but the room was so miserably cold, that I told the worthy host, I would rather sit up till daylight, provided he would give me some blankets, a little whiskey, and some red-hot peats from the kitchen, that would give warmth without smoke.

The landlord became quite distressed at this proposal, and urged me by all means to go to bed—indeed he almost insisted upon it. He said many hours must elapse ere it was daylight, and that I should awake in the course of the night miserably cold, and but little refreshed after my journey, and unfit for my departure on the morrow.

I was well aware, from experience, that the sleep to be obtained on a couple of chairs has not the same restorative effects as a good night's rest in bed; but the appearance of this house was so wretched and uninviting, that I still preferred taking my chance on the chairs.

The hostess soon entered the room, and informed me, through her husband, who acted as interpreter, that if I had any objection to sleep with strangers, in the same room, she would instantly make them get up, and join the remainder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Bed in the Cheese Room at Clashcarnock.—*Page* 213.

of the party, who were sleeping in the apartment adjoining the kitchen.

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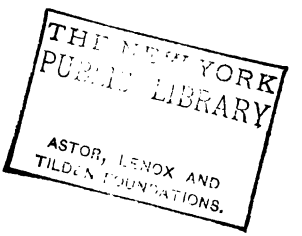
tained a moderate supply of water, rafters formed the roof, and planks the walls; above these was a kind of gallery, along which I heard the heavy step of more Caithness fishermen, as the passing shadows of their heads and bonnets were thrown upon the sides of my "comfortable" bed room.

Having divested myself of my kilt and jacket, I put my "gully," or "skean dhu," beneath my pillow, and tried to compose myself to rest—which, however, was a vain attempt. I was tired, and fell into a doze, producing a sort of unconsciousness of my situation, from which I was presently aroused by a sensation of extreme cold, accompanied with tooth-ache. I lay awake for some time in great pain, during which a tremendous knocking at the door of the house, accompanied by loud calls in Gaelic, for admittance, proclaimed the arrival of more fishermen, who had come from Peterhead, intending, like those from Caithness, to proceed to Ullapool.

It was a tremendous night of rain and wind, the latter element blowing a small hurricane through my wretched apartment. Although I congratulated myself on reaching this miserable tenement, and felt thankful that I was not lying on the "Dirie More;" yet I arose under the torment of tooth-ache from my box bed, and succeeded in allaying the pain, to a certain degree, by a modicum of whiskey and a pipe. It was far too airy an apartment, however, to detain me long; and, in a fit of desperation, I determined to bend my steps towards the embers of peat, which I was sure would last through the night for the purpose of preparing breakfast for the fishermen.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KITCHEN AT CLASHCARNOCK.—*Page* 215.

Having lighted my candle, I proceeded through the first apartment I had entered, in which seven or eight men were lying in every variety of posture. I stopped for a few moments to survey the group of sleepers, who were totally unconscious of my approach, and who continued to snore, in happy ignorance of their passing observer. On reaching the kitchen, a somewhat similar scene presented itself, of the five men (whose knocking had a short time since aroused me) sleeping profoundly in a variety of attitudes, all apparently uneasy ones, with the single exception of one, who occupied two chairs, a wet bag of potatoes, which he had carried, forming his pillow.

These men had arrived at one o'clock in the morning, drenched to the skin, and being unable to obtain a bed, had, after a dram of whiskey, quietly composed themselves to sleep, before a roaring peat fire, which was kept alive and blazing by a Highland lassie, who happened to arrive last evening, and like myself continued awake, waiting the approach of daylight; for which we both earnestly longed, in order to take our respective departures, from, perhaps, the most wretched house in Britain.

After sitting an hour or so, before a roaring fire on one side, and a furious wind upon the other, from which my plaid in a great degree sheltered me, a gentle kick informed me, that one of the bairns, whom I previously found at play, was somewhat restless. The other four were quiet enough; while a deep breath, and a turn of an adult in the same bed, followed by the development of a hand wearing a wedding ring, pro-

claimed the presence of the kind hostess, who still remained concealed under the same coverlet.

At five o'clock the morning broke, when, as if by instinct, the landlady turned out of bed, ready dressed, as on the previous night, and happy in leaving the children asleep and quiet, proceeded to make preparations for breakfast. The hostess had merely laid herself down for sleep in her clothes, beside her children, in consequence of every nook and corner of the house available for sleeping being occupied.

This woman, after arising from sleep, afforded a fine study for an artist wishing to introduce into a picture a true portrait of a Highland wife. Let the painter imagine a remarkably good-looking woman, with a clear and healthy complexion, dark hair, good teeth, sparkling eyes, cheerful smile, coupled with a figure by no means devoid of grace, although decidedly stout; dressed in a dark stuff petticoat, surmounted by a short, loose jacket of white linen, leaving the arm partially bare, as suited to the offices which it is required to perform, such as baking bannocks, or washing the linen of the household; and he will not err in his representation—which will become still more faithful, if he can pourtray upon the countenance that peculiar and delightful matronly innocence and contentment, which those bred in towns so seldom behold.

The rising of the hostess was soon followed by the stretches and yawns of the waking fishermen, who systematically lighted their pipes, and wishing me good morning, proceeded to "the best room," to join their brother fishers, in the discus-

sion of a hasty breakfast, consisting of oatmeal and whiskey.

The clock had struck five, which induced the Highland lassie to prepare herself for her departure for Ullapool, a distance of twenty-one miles, the greater part of which lay across the Dirie More, a most solitary road, rendered, in my opinion, by no means more agreeable to a woman, by the attendance of five fishermen, who had undertaken to escort her, and were perfect strangers.

I now commenced preparations for my own departure. My toilet was by no means elaborate, while my ablutions were moderate, but extremely refreshing after the weary night I had passed. I was supplied with soap and a basin of cold water in the cheese room, which was as cold as it was on the previous night, while it appeared still less inviting, as it exhibited the real causes of discomfort, many of which had escaped my notice in the dark. There were two small windows in the room into one of which I had stuffed a couple of cheeses, together with my plaid in order to exclude some of the wind. I now found that the frames of both the windows were utterly devoid of glass or any kind of substitute, while between them was an immense fire-place, which, together with its chimney was in ruins, and afforded an easy access to the wind and rain, as it now did to the sun, which poured far more light through this aperture, than through the windows. By the time that I had completed my hasty toilet, a very good breakfast, composed of the same edibles as my supper of the previous night, was prepared in "the best room," which was now vacated by

the fishermen who after their simple repast of meal and whiskey had taken their departure. I paid my moderate bill of two shillings for supper and breakfast, besides an additional charge for whiskey; nothing being required for my bed which I had been so speedily obliged to quit. The landlord expressed his surprise that I had not rested well in the cheese room, and regretted that the "best," apartment, of which he entertained a great idea, was occupied. Strange to say, this man has a piece of land of his own, in another quarter, producing him fifty pounds a year, and yet he has continued for a long time to live in this most wretched tenement. I have visited many of the humblest and most comfortless cottages, but the meanest hut cannot be a more miserable dwelling place than Clashcarnoch, compared with which the grasskeeper's cottage was a palace. The pedestrian will be glad to stop here for refreshment in the day-time, but let him never seek it at night, unless as Dr. M'Kenzie said, to sit beside the fire, rather than expose himself to the danger of proceeding farther in a tremendous storm. The provisions were in every respect unexceptionable, but the night's discomfort has made a lasting impression upon my mind.

To describe this house is beyond the power of pen or pencil. The landlord told me that he was about to leave this place shortly as he could get no repairs done. There is a new inn building at about a mile further on the road to Garve. It appeared, as I passed it, to be nearly completed, and will be a comfortable house on a small scale. The pedestrian passing along this road next year

will in all probability be more comfortably housed, should he wish to stop for the night, but he will not witness the scene, which I am now glad that I beheld, as affording a thorough knowledge of a rude and primitive public house.

CHAPTER XIX.

Departure from Clashcarnoch—The Mail from Ullapool—Garve—The Blackwater—Loch Garve—Falls of Rogie—Contin Inn—Contin, to the Bridge of Orrin—Bridge of Orrin Inn—Departure from Bridge of Orrin—Beauly—Drumnadrochit Inn—Ruisky—Invermoriston Inn—Invermoriston to Fort William—Invergarry.

THE next morning after proceeding a short distance, I was overtaken by the mail from Ullapool in which, being empty (save the driver and his bags), I availed myself of a seat. This vehicle was a dog-cart, or rather a Whitechapel, drawn by one horse, who shyed a little and stumbled considerably, while the youthful Jehu appeared to do all he could to jolt the vehicle and to throw down the beast by carefully driving over any loose stones that lay by the side of an excellent road. The scenery between Clashcarnoch and Garve is not particularly interesting, lying over a flat moorland. The river Blackwater, which flows beside the road, exhibits several picturesque pools and streams.

We reached Garve at ten (A. M.), and being somewhat fatigued after my night at Clashcarnoch, I determined to proceed no further to-day. I devoted the first hour after my arrival to a bath and toilet, which refreshed me beyond measure. After ordering my dinner, I strolled out to the river, which affords good fishing when in order; but being now almost dry, I made a few unsuc-

cessful casts in a pool below the bridge, and in the course of ten minutes, abandoned the angler's craft, and whiled away the time, by making a sketch of the spot, which must present a grand appearance when the river is flooded. The inn at Garve affords excellent accommodation, for which the charges are somewhat exorbitant, as compared with the generality of inns in the Highlands. I had an excellent dinner, one of the dishes being the real food of the old mountaineer—viz. "goat's flesh." I doubly appreciated the luxuries, elegance, and comfort of my bed-room to-night, after my weary entertainment at Clashcarnoch.

At half past one o'clock on the following day, shortly after the completion of morning service at the kirk, I again started on my pedestrian journey. There is a road from Garve to the west coast, leading to Loch Carron and Skye, which I should have selected by choice, as I was very anxious to visit this island, as well as the fine district of Applecross and the Falls of Glomak. Time, however, would not permit me to take this route, so I was compelled to proceed by the southern road. At a short distance from the inn, I passed a pretty little lake, called Loch Garve, its banks presenting a soft rather than a grand appearance. A great number of wild ducks were floating upon its surface. At a distance of a mile or thereabouts, the moorland changed into a sylvan scene, the road running between fine woods on either side. After walking another mile and a half, I was attracted by the sound of rushing water, to an opening in the wood on the left hand side of the road, from which I had a view of the

"Falls of Rogie," which form a pleasing object in the surrounding scene, but are rather insignificant in themselves considered as waterfalls. The road still conducted me through wood for a short distance, when the view became less confined, but equally beautiful, as some fine hills, forming an excellent deer forest, made their appearance, still accompanied with abundance of wood.

At a distance of five miles from Garve, I arrived at the inn of Contin, which presents a very tempting appearance to the traveller. This is a most comfortable house—extremely well furnished, and is kept by a remarkably civil landlord, who has evinced his taste and industry, in planning and making a very pretty garden, though of small extent, on the opposite side of the road.

I was so much taken with the appearance of this inn, and its cheerful flower-garden, which presented such a contrast to all I had seen for months past, that I resolved to halt for half an hour, and take some refreshment, of which I did not really stand in need, but which became a matter of necessity for "the good of the house." What I intended to be a sandwich, became a very good dinner. The landlady informed me, that she had some cold meat in the larder, as well as a brace of grouse roasted on the previous day, which could be made hot, together with potatoes, in a very short time. I availed myself of the proposal, and during the culinary preparations, I examined the flowers, and could not help admiring the neatness of their arrangement, and the cleverness with which a flower-garden had been made, in a very short time, out of a small piece of waste-

ground, which now produced, in addition, a fair supply of more useful commodities, in the form of common fruits and vegetables. A heavy shower commenced as the grouse were placed upon the table, and it continued raining heavily for some time after I had completed an excellent dinner, for which the moderate charge was little more than I should have paid for a luncheon of bread and cheese.

After a prolonged halt of three hours at Contin, I again started for the Bridge of Orrin. Although I had now penetrated some distance into Ross-shire, and hailed, with delight, the appearance of wood, which in Assynt is almost unknown, I had not hitherto been struck with the extraordinary contrast presented to the adjoining county of Sutherland, which contrast now became most palpable.

From Ullapool to Clashcarnoch, with the exception of a few trees about Inverbroom, the district I had traversed was a dreary moorland. From Clashcarnoch to Garve it was little better, and for the first two miles beyond Garve, the improvement was scarcely apparent. For the last three miles, as I have already stated, there was a considerable amount of wood.

On leaving Contin, however, I could have fancied myself transported a thousand miles from far more inviting spots than the Dirie More. Here was excellent land, and equally good cultivation of the soil, while good farm-houses, and large stack-yards, bespoke the opulence of the farmer, and neat and comfortable cottages formed the residences of the labourers. The district in which I had resided for some months, as well as that

through which I had lately travelled, although affording *grander* scenery, presented but a solitary hut or two at every ten or twelve miles interval, while now at every two or three hundred yards, cottages were collected together, in any one of which the pedestrian could learn the track he should pursue, or, in case of necessity, obtain a comfortable night's lodging; while the neat cottages and well-cultivated fields resemble those of Kent; heather-clad hills surround the land of tillage, and mountain streams and rivers declare it to be the Scottish Highlands. The excellent corn and turnip soil, affords ample food to the partridge, whose note of call I recognized in various directions; while the grouse and ptarmigan were at no great distance, and the salmon and trout lying close at hand.

At a distance of five miles from Contin, I reached the small inn of the bridge of Orrin, situated at a distance of a hundred yards from the bridge crossing the river. I cannot speak in very high terms of the accommodation offered here, but it may possibly improve; the landlord who was for some time in the service of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, as coachman, had been in possession of this house but a short time, and the lassie who waited upon me apologised for a little discomfort, which she gave me to understand would cease when "the things arrived," which had been long expected; many "things" are required to make this house comfortable, and the sooner they arrive the better for those who may happen to sleep in the house. I was shewn into an apartment, combining the double appellation of bed and sitting room; I have no objection to this

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ment.
mediately after breakfast I started for Beau-

ly, which, after a six miles walk (through the same description of land and scenery as that between Contin and the Bridge of Orrin) I reached; where, after witnessing once more the performances of some restive horses, which appear to abound in that neighbourhood, I continued my journey in the direction of Drumnadrochit. The first portion of the road for several miles, is well wooded, passing through the property of Lord Lovat. At a distance of six or seven miles from Beauly, the woodland scene changes to that of a wild and barren moor, just on the verge of which two farm houses, and a few cottages are congregated together, after passing which, no dwellings appear until the village of Drumnadrochit, situated at the mouth of the beautiful Glen Urquhart, bursts upon the view, to which the traveller is conducted by a long and very steep descent from the high moorland.

I was delighted with the situation and internal comforts of this most excellent inn, which is furnished in first rate style, and is capable of affording very great accommodation, which is frequently required, owing to the number of tourists and families resorting to this house during the summer months; the landlord was absent from home on the night of my arrival, but I can vouch for the civility and attention of the hostess, who does all in her power to render her guests comfortable.

My progress to-day from the bridge of Orrin, amounted exactly to nineteen miles, and I determined to halt for the night, at these inviting quarters, where I was well supplied with broiled salmon and eggs at tea; and after enjoying an

excellent night's rest, my apartment being replete with every convenience, I sat down to the discussion of a most liberal breakfast, after which, with a feeling of reluctance, I departed from the most comfortable inn I had visited in the course of my tour ; while Lairg surpasses all in its extraordinary profusion of edibles.

I left Drumnadrochit at half-past eleven o'clock, and took the short road for Invermoriston. There is a good road the whole way beside Loch Ness, generally preferred by those proceeding in vehicles of any description. The route I selected, saved me about two miles in distance, but the ascent of a very steep brae, of a mile-and-a-half in length, soon after starting, perhaps nearly made up for the difference.

After climbing this hill, my road lay for six miles over a wild and uninteresting moorland, with the exception of the last half mile, which was beautifully wooded as I approached Loch Ness, upon which I was looking down, from a height gradually decreasing, till I arrived, after a short but very abrupt descent, at the inn, or rather public house, of Ruisky, where I stopped for half-an-hour to rest and refresh myself. A boat is kept here for the purpose of conveying tourists across Loch Ness to view the beautiful fall of Foyers, which I had visited some years before.

I now continued my journey along the shores of Loch Ness by an excellent and level road, beautifully wooded on either side, rocks and mountains rising on the right hand, while the deep waters of the lake reposed upon the left. Every inch of this ground was beautiful, and be-

came still more picturesque, as I approached Invermoriston. At this inn, although I had only walked thirteen miles to-day, I determined to stop for the night, intending to proceed on the morrow to Fort William, a distance of about thirty-seven miles.

The Invermoriston inn is inferior in point of size to that of Drumnadrochit, but is a very comfortable house, and the landlady is an extremely civil person, actively superintending the sleeping and culinary departments of her inn, and rendering both, all that her guests can desire.

The reader may possibly think that I speak too frequently of the hostess of the various inns I have visited in my tour; but I must beg leave to say, that in my opinion it is the landlady of the house to whom we are indebted for the real comforts of the inn we visit as our night's quarters. The mere house-of-call may supply our wants, as far as a glass of mountain dew, or a bannock, are concerned, though the landlord be a bachelor, or have a sickly, or inactive wife; but thus far the affair goes, and no farther, unless it be in the stabling department, which is his own province. If, however, the wearied pedestrian requires comfortable night's quarters, let him depend upon it, he will never find them, unless an active and good hostess busies herself in the superintendence of her servants, who, if left to themselves, will, without a moment's consideration put him into a damp bed, with the most solemn assurances, that it was "slept in last night."

I intended making an early start on the following day, but I was unavoidably detained at Invermoriston until half-past ten o'clock; and al-

though I was anxious to perform the route by land to Fort William, I felt that I should be so late ere I reached my destination, that I was inclined to take advantage of the steamer shortly expected to arrive from Inverness.

I hurried down from Invermoriston to a small pier, distant about half-a-mile, from which passengers are conveyed, in a little boat, to the steamer which lies-to, at a short distance from shore, whenever a signal is given. On my arrival at this point, I found that I was a few minutes too late, and had the disappointment of observing the vessel steaming away before me.

I calculated that, by dint of hard walking, I might still overtake her at Fort Augustus, where she is detained for twenty minutes or more, in passing the locks. The road, which still skirted the side of Loch Ness, is beautifully wooded. Through this picturesque scene, I wasted but little time, as the reader may imagine, when I inform him that I performed the distance of six miles, including the ascent of one or two braes, in an hour and eight minutes. I reached Fort Augustus just as the steamer was leaving the last lock. I walked beside her on the bank of the canal for a short distance, but she soon gained ground upon me, and I now considered it a hopeless task to attempt to overtake her.

After proceeding about a mile, I inquired of a man, working beside the canal, what was the distance to the next lock at which the steamer would be detained.

He could not exactly tell me; but he informed me that she would only be delayed for ten minutes, and that it was impossible to overtake her,

as the path I was treading would soon cease, and I should be compelled to make my way over rock, hill, and heather.

Not wishing to pass the night in the open air, beside the Caledonian Canal, I struck across some moorland ground on the left, and at a distance of about half-a-mile, found myself at a small public house, beside the main road to Fort William, to which place I now made up my mind to walk, after a short rest.

While I was making inquiry as to the real distance to Fort William, and the inns on the road, at which, in case of need, I might hire some kind of vehicle, to put me a few miles upon my journey, a fortunate circumstance occurred, which induced me to change my route. It was my intention to continue my course along the south side of the Caledonian Canal—I was informed, that at a distance of thirteen miles, I should reach the inn of Letterfinlay, on Loch Lochy, where I should be enabled to obtain a vehicle of some description, and that beyond Letterfinlay, at a distance of nine miles, I could get a conveyance at Unachan, which is seven miles from Fort William.

I was just on the point of taking my departure from the little public house, when a gentleman (who proved to be a medical practitioner, residing at Fort Augustus) drove up to the door. Hearing from the ostler of my intention of walking to Fort William, he very kindly introduced himself to me, telling me, that if he could assist me in any way, he should be extremely glad to do so. The doctor had a patient to visit, at about a mile's distance, which he intended to walk, leaving his horse to bait during his absence. He told me, if

I were willing to wait for his return, he would drive me to Invergarry, a distance of seven miles, from which place I must make my way as I could, as he was obliged to proceed to Tormandown that night.

I thanked the doctor for his kindness, of which, I told him, I should gladly avail myself; and so depositing my little knapsack under the seat of his gig, I sat down to enjoy a grateful pipe, holding myself in readiness for departure to the Invergarry inn, to which I had bid adieu, as I imagined, for this year, some months before.

In little more than half-an-hour Dr. Gwynne returned; who assisted me in the discussion of a gill of whisky, while his horse was made ready for departure. We soon stepped into the vehicle, and in the course of an hour arrived at the sweet situation to which the doctor had undertaken to convey me.

CHAPTER XX.

Invergarry to Fort William—Overturn of Dog-Cart—Fort William—Highland Games—Caledonian Hotel—Fort William to Ballachulish—Loch Linnhe—Coran Ferry—Loch Leven—Ballachulish—Tourists—Arrival of Glencoe and Glenorchy Coach—Tourists—Ballachulish Ferry—Optical Delusion.

My meeting with Dr. Gwynne proved to be a doubly fortunate circumstance, as this gentleman's kindness in conveying me to Invergarry, was the means of advancing me on my journey a very considerable distance beyond that place. I was just starting for Fort William, when, asking a man at the stable-door what was considered to be the distance, he informed me, that it was twenty-seven miles to Banavie, and three miles on from thence. He had just arrived in a dog-cart; and after giving his horse an hour and a half to bait, intended to return, and would feel extremely glad to take me at a moderate rate of hire. He asked me ten shillings, which I told him was too much, and I agreed to give him five, which he was willing to accept, provided I would pay for his horse's bait, which, together with a gill of whisky, which I volunteered to himself, cost me one shilling. The driver, who was a very steady and civil man, was perfectly satisfied, and I was equally well pleased with my bargain. The day was far advanced, and to get a cast of twenty-seven miles out of thirty, could not be dearly purchased at six shillings.

I was cordially greeted, on entering the inn, by Mr. and Mrs. M'Donald, who made many inquiries as to my doings since my stay at their house. The first part of our road was wooded and picturesque, but after a distance of a few miles, the scenery assumed a wild and savage aspect, as we skirted the side of Loch Lochy (ten miles in length and about one wide), while an assemblage of mountains loomed in the approaching darkness. At a small public-house, I forget the exact distance from Invergarry, the driver stopped for half an hour to feed his horse, having brought corn with him, as being an article not kept on the premises. This is the only house coming under the denomination of an inn between Invergarry and Banavie, and its supplies are of a very moderate description. I got a cup of tea and some bannocks and butter, which were served to me in a very clean brick-floored room, by a civil and good-humoured hostess, who spoke English as well as Gaelic, and who supplied me with a ready-kindled peat fire on the instant of my arrival. I can say but little with regard to the scenery beyond this point, as the remainder of my journey was performed in darkness.

We were, however, evidently travelling over a wild moorland, with a portion of which I became better acquainted than I wished. At a few miles distance from the public-house, the driver asked me the time, which in the dark, even with the aid of a lighted pipe, I could not decipher, owing to the shaking of the cart; this he endeavoured to enable me to do by stopping his horse. We were both trying to read the face of my watch, when the horse backed a little, and in a moment

we were upset. The vehicle turning over to the left, I was the first to lie upon a soft mossy ground, the driver, who was shortly to follow me, "warning me to take care of myself," which I had time to tell him I would do, before he arrived beside me, so slowly and quietly did the trap turn over. The driver, who had regained his feet, (while I was at the horse's head before the conveyance, which was lying topsy-turvy) appeared almost beside himself, as he feared the harness, or dog-cart, or what was worse, the horse, might be injured, which, he said, would induce his master to suppose he was intoxicated, and to discharge him on that account from his service. I heartily pitied the poor fellow, as he appeared almost ready to cry with grief. The horse was a good and a quiet beast, at the same time I feared that his struggles to disengage himself from his harness, might cause mischief, and, accordingly, I put my hand upon his neck, and kept him down, until such time as his trammels could be loosened. In the meantime, I felt that we should require assistance, to draw the dog-cart from its mossy bed to the road again. I begged the driver to calm himself, asking him, if there were any house near, where he thought he could procure a man to aid us. Fortunately at a distance of less than half a mile, was a cottage near the road side, to which I begged my jehu to betake himself, promising to keep my hold upon the horse, and to prevent further accident till his return. Away he went as fast as he could run, while shortly after his departure, the deep and heavily-breathing horse endeavoured to commence the struggles I had anticipated, but which I effectually pre-

vented, by a heavier and tighter pressure upon his head. After standing for about a quarter of an hour, in any thing but an easy attitude, I discerned the approach of a lanthorn, accompanied by the voices of two men, who were soon beside me, and proceeded to unloose the harness of the prostrate beast, which I continued to keep pinioned to the ground, until all was prepared for his uprising, which he performed very quietly, as soon as I removed the pressure. The driver and the shepherd, who had come to our assistance, righted the vehicle, and brought it to the road, while I stood at the horse's head. On examination by the light of the lanthorn, we found nothing was the worse, and we were in a few minutes ready to pursue our journey. One thing was missing, viz.—the *gully* out of my stocking, which I might have sought for a considerable time, had not the cairngorm, surmounting it, glittered under the searching light, as it lay on the dark moss, close to the spot on which I had fallen. The shepherd desired no remuneration, and wished me health and better luck, as he took a dram from my pocket-flask.

It was fortunate for us that our accident, simple as it was, happened where it did; had it occurred further on, it would, in all probability, have been attended with more serious consequences.

For some distance before reaching Banavie, the road, although good and level, but somewhat narrow, runs along the top of a steep embankment, without railing, or protection of any kind, on the right hand side of which lies the Caledo-

nian Canal, sixteen feet deep, the River Lochy flowing immediately on the left.

On reaching the bridge opposite Banavie inn, I alighted, and pursued my way on foot for three miles, at the end of which I reached my destination, Fort William. I was engaged to meet a friend at the Caledonian hotel, or I should have given a preference to the Banavie hotel, which I had just left.

I found the inn much crowded, as the Highland meeting was to be holden here on the following day, when the town was enlivened by kilts, displaying the tartans of the various clans. It was half-past twelve when I reached the inn, with a tolerable appetite, which the waiter informed me could not be appeased till the morning, as the cook was gone to-bed. After declaring that unless I could have something to eat, I should go to another house, I succeeded in obtaining some excellent cold mutton and pickles, which, together with a bottle of bitter ale, induced me to retire to rest, satisfied till the following day.

After breakfast, I passed a short time in witnessing the Highland games of running, putting the stone, throwing the hammer, &c. after which I took my departure for Ballachulish, a distance of thirteen miles. I have endeavoured throughout the recital of my tour, to give a true and just account of the inns which I visited, and cannot proceed further without remarking, that while I have no reason to complain of the provisions, or accommodation to be met with, at the Caledonian hotel, I considered the charges very exorbitant, and a demand of four shillings for a room in

which I took my breakfast, and remained for two hours, was a gross imposition. This hotel, although offering very fair accommodation, is very inferior to Drumnadrochit and others at which all the charges are moderate, while the item of "apartments" as referring to a sitting-room, is never mentioned in the bill.

The road from Fort William is very level, skirting the south side of Loch Linnhe, an arm of the sea, on the opposite side of which rise the mountains of Argyllshire. This lake is enlivened by a number of boats employed for the purpose of fishing. At a distance of nine miles, I halted for a short time at Coran ferry, watching the extraordinary rapid current, as it boiled in its progress, carrying boats that were crossing a considerable distance beyond a straight course, from which cause the distance as well as the labour of the rowers is wonderfully increased.

Soon after passing this ferry the road continues for a short distance along the north side of Loch Leven, which is a branch of Loch Linnhe, pursuing a straight course between the counties of Invernesshire and Argyllshire. The road becomes more wooded and picturesque for the last mile before reaching Ballachulish, where there is a ferry across Loch Leven, on either side of which there is an inn.

I took up my quarters to-night at the house on the north side, the larger and more frequented tourists' hotel displaying a number of lights which argued a pretty full complement of visitors. I found this house, though of more moderate pretensions than its southern rival, extremely clean and comfortable, and although it had a good share

of patronage earlier in the season, it was unoccupied by strangers to-night. I found my night's quarters clean and comfortable, both as regarded the sleeping and culinary department.

I rose betimes and after a good breakfast was again ready for departure, which I was induced to defer, owing to the arrival of the Glencoe and Glenorchy coach, which brought a little horde of tourists prepared to breakfast on the opposite side of the ferry.

This ferry presents something of the rapidity of stream observable at Coran, and it was by no means a straight passage which the embarked tourists performed to their breakfast. In about twenty minutes after their arrival on the opposite side, I witnessed the departure of the well-loaded coach, and I stepped into the boat in the course of half-an-hour. The tide was now high and the strong current had subsided. In the absence of the ferryman I was pulled across by the waiter, who informed me that he had never undertaken the exploit before, and considering the length of the huge unwieldy oars, he performed the business remarkably well without assistance, which I was ready to offer, but which the passage being little more than a hundred yards, he dispensed with. Had the tide been still running heavily, I should have insisted upon taking one oar. I landed in safety on the opposite shore, and watched the return of the novice.

Before proceeding further, I cannot refrain from mentioning a circumstance which occurred to me twelve years ago, while staying at the hotel on the south side of the ferry. In the year 1842, having made a short tour through the lake

district of England, with a Cambridge friend, we determined to extend our wanderings over a portion of Scotland, and after having visited the Islands of Mull, Staffa, and Iona, arrived on the day following at Ballachulish, by the steamer from Oban. After taking tea at the inn, we were informed by the landlord, who was then single, (but now long since deceased, leaving a widow who conducts the house), that we should be repaid for a short walk of two or three miles, by witnessing the games and festivities, enacted by the light of a bonfire, enjoyed by the neighbouring peasantry at the invitation of a gentleman who wished to celebrate the birth of a son and heir. My friend being somewhat indisposed declined accompanying me, but a medical man whom we met at the inn offered to join me. We started in the twilight of a beautiful summer's evening, pursuing our road along the south side of Loch Leven in the direction of Glencoe, being informed by the landlord that at the distance of two miles we should come to a path striking off to the right, which would lead us directly to the festive scene.

We walked on for more than the distance prescribed without perceiving the promised path, and both the doctor and myself began to weary of what we considered the prosecution of a fool's errand. In a few minutes I observed to my companion that we should soon learn the road from three women, who were approaching, and whose dress and appearance led me to conclude were returning from the place we were seeking.

"What women!" was the doctor's exclamation; "I see none."

I was astonished at this, and almost fancied

my companion had become suddenly blind, especially when he positively declared that no person was approaching us, while the three women were now as I imagined, within a few yards of us. I almost lost my temper, while at the same time, I inquired of the females the road we were seeking, and I was by no means better pleased on receiving no reply from the women, who, instead of answering my question, commenced dancing backwards, in which fantastic proceeding I followed them, determined to get some kind of answer. Having stepped over a low railing, I still pursued the fleeting nymphs, who continued to distance me until I reached the white wall of a small chapel, on the loch side, at a distance of about fifty yards from the doctor, who laughed heartily at my disappointment, while I stood for a few moments viewing the wall into which they seemed to flatten themselves, and disappear much after the fashion of a harlequin in a pantomime.

These women appeared to be of the same height and proportions, both of which were those of large women, their costume consisted of straw bonnets, trimmed with plain white ribbons, their shawls were white with dark borders, their dresses were dark. I am by no means superstitious or imaginative, and I generally account for the visions of other persons by supposing that those to whom they appear are either intoxicated, or that they have conjured up some apparition in their own minds.

I have traversed the most sequestered districts, the most lonely roads and lanes, many of which in Yorkshire, as well as others in Scotland and elsewhere, were declared to be haunted by head-

less women and supernatural and brutal male spirits; and although I have ridden and walked such roads at all hours of the night, to say nothing of visiting church yards by moonlight, I never before this time or since fancied the appearance of any being, except that of some bodily form that might present itself. I leave it to the more learned in the study of optics to determine the cause of my seeing distinctly on this occasion three women, undiscerned by my companion.

I believe that the vision is to be accounted for, solely by the law of reflection, in which opinion I am supported by the appearance of those women exactly resembling each other in stature and dress; which would seem to argue the triple representation of one woman who was in all probability performing the backward dancing at a considerable distance, but which was reflected to my sight, while the eye of my friend having a different focus perceived it not. I could discern no features whatever beneath the bonnets of these imaginary ladies.

After this digression, I shall proceed to my tour homewards, which will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

Departure from Ballachulish—Slate Quarries—Pass of Glencoe—The King's House Inn—Coach again—More Tourists—The Black Mount—Loch Lydoch—Loch Rannoch—Marquis of Breadalbane's Deer Forest—Inverouran—Loch Tulla—Glenorchy—Tyndrum—The King's Field—St. Fillan's Church and Pool—Crianlarich—Inverarnan—Loch Lomond—Inversnaid—Loch Katrine—Ellen's Isle—Ben Ledi—Ben An—Trosachs Inn—Horse Hire in Perthshire—Tolls—Mrs. Ferguson's Inn—Arrival at Callander—Bank—Free Church—Falls of Bracklinn—Loch Achray—Loch Venachar—Loch Lubnaig—The River Teith—Pike—Perth—St. Andrew's—Aberdeen—Lake Menteith—Inchmachome, or the "Isle of Rest"—Talla, or the "Earl's Isle"—Priory—Tomb of the second Earl of Menteith and Countess—Queen Mary's Bower.

HAVING crossed the ferry, and arrived on the south bank, where I left the reader at the commencement of my story, I proceeded along the side of Loch Leven for a distance of two miles, when I reached the celebrated slate quarries, which, while they give employment to a number of people, are decidedly eye sores in this lovely scene. I could not help being struck with the pale and puny appearance of the numerous offspring of the quarrymen, as I passed through this long line of cottages and works, which seemed almost interminable. I was glad to hurry through this place, which brought to my mind the miserable and wretched scenes of trade, and its accompanying vice and profligacy. Proceeding about a mile, I left this congregation of slate quarrymen, puny bairns, and sickly looking wives,

and once more breathed the pure and untainted air of the Highlands. After pursuing my course for two or three miles, I entered the magnificent "Pass of Glencoe," which has been too frequently described and extolled to need any remark from myself, while, at the same time, I must say that its wild and lonely magnificence of scenery surpasses the descriptions I have seen, and can only be appreciated by a visit, which is easily made now-a-days, by the tourist.

From one end to the other of this wild and savage glen, but one solitary farm house is to be seen. The sides of this pass are grand in the extreme, being composed of steep rocks and precipices, which rise to an immense height, while the Cona, which issues from a small lake in the glen, pours its crystal waters over a rocky bed at their base.

At a considerable height, is discerned the Cave of Ossian, which appears like a narrow window, or niche. On issuing from the pass, a wild and barren tract of moorland presents itself, while an endless number of mountains arise on all sides. After pursuing this road for about three miles further, I arrived at the solitary Inn called the King's House, the situation of which, is bleak and desolate in the extreme.

The distance I had walked to-day from Ballachulish is sixteen miles, the road through Glencoe being somewhat steep and fatiguing. I slept here to-night, and found the accommodation very clean and comfortable, and was supplied, at tea, with some of the largest and finest flavoured herrings I ever tasted.

Before I was up, next morning, I heard a great clattering of plates and tea cups in the sitting

room adjoining my bed room, which was accompanied with a constant ringing of the bell, and orders for more eggs, herrings, and other ingredients of breakfast. The Glencoe and Glenorchy coach had arrived, and, owing to the smallness of the rooms in this very old house, breakfast was prepared up stairs and down stairs, not excepting my sitting room.

It was about one o'clock when I took my departure from the King's House, determined to reach Tyndrum to-night.

At a quarter of a mile from the inn, I commenced a long and steep ascent, over what is called the Black Mount. At this point, besides Loch Lydoch, an immense number of small lakes lie stretched over the dreary moorland in the direction of Loch Rannoch. I believe there is very fair trout fishing in these lakes earlier in the season, but the fish are generally small. At a distance of three miles from the King's House, I halted for an hour by the road side, hoping to see something of the Highland chase, the Marquis of Breadalbane being out in his deer forest, which lies in the immediate neighbourhood. There was every probability of a herd of deer making their way across the dreary moorland I was now traversing; but, hearing a shot or two, which were followed by another giving a fainter report, I concluded (which I afterwards found to be the case), that the noble game had taken a contrary direction.

The day was wearing, and I had yet sixteen miles to walk, so I proceeded steadily over a black moorland until I reached Inverouran, a

distance of nine miles and a half from the King's House.

The situation of Inverouran is very beautiful, standing close to Loch Tulla, in the immediate vicinity of which, some fine wood enlivens the landscape, forming a pleasing change after the road I had traversed.

At the distance of a mile, before I reached Inverouran, I was much pleased with the Forester's House, which is built and supplied with every convenience for the Marquis, who stays here occasionally when hunting in the neighbourhood. This house presents a truly sporting appearance; over the door, the antlers of a fine stag display themselves, while, in the hall within, hang a number of "sporrans," (bearing the crest of the Marquis), worn by his Highland foresters when attending the chase.

I staid for about ten minutes at Inverouran, which appears to be a clean and comfortable house on a small scale. For a short distance, the road continues beside Loch Tulla, and is beautifully wooded, but only for a few hundred yards, when it again traverses a wild moorland. The River Orchy, which flows on the left, is crossed by a bridge two miles distant from Inverouran, after which, it flows on the right of the road which continues through the picturesque, though wild and lonely valley of Glenorchy, seven miles to Tyndrum, which I reached at night, having traversed the last six miles in comparative darkness, rendered more disagreeable by an hour's heavy rain, which brought me in a moist state to my night's quarters.

I found the accommodation afforded by the

Tyndrum Inn very good. This house is kept by a widow, in the management of which she is assisted by her son, a civil and attentive person.

Tyndrum, situated at the head of Strathfillan, is rendered famous as being in proximity to what is called the King's Field, the scene of a severe engagement between Robert Bruce and the Lord of Lorn, by whom the king was repulsed, being, at length, compelled to leave his mantle and brooch in the hands of his opponents, after many proofs of strength and courage, which so invariably signalized the actions of the monarch.

At about ten o'clock next morning I started from Tyndrum, and pursued the road to Inverarnan. Two miles from Tyndrum is the church of St. Fillan, where there is a pool, in the river Ettrick, dedicated to the saint, in which, till recently, lunatics and other afflicted persons were frequently dipped, after which, being bound, they were laid for the night in the churchyard, where the infatuated beings expected to receive a cure.

During the last twelve years, only two or three persons have been sufficiently insane, or superstitious, to have resort to the supposed healing powers of this well.

After passing the inn of Crianlarich, two miles beyond St. Fillan's, the road lies for some distance over moorland, but becomes beautifully wooded and extremely picturesque for about two miles before reaching Inverarnan.

I reached Inverarnan late in the evening, and, after taking a sandwich, shortly retired to bed, having to make an early start in the morning.

Soon after four o'clock, I walked to the head of Loch Lomond, and took the steamer (which

started at five A. M.) as far as Inversnaid, from which I walked six miles to the Coal barn, on Loch Katrine; where, after waiting an hour and a-half for the small steamer plying upon the lake, I took my passage to its eastern extremity.

This was a most unfavourable day for the tourist; it was raining heavily when I reached Inversnaid, from which there is a long ascent, almost perpendicular, which all passengers by the coach running between this place and the Coal barn, are forced to walk, the coach being kept at the summit of the hill, up and down which it cannot proceed.

I should have availed myself of this conveyance, but, unfortunately, it did not start until the arrival of a later boat from Inverarnan.

It continued to rain heavily as I walked the six rugged miles to the Coal barn, on reaching which I found the sides of Loch Katrine veiled in a dense mist. I regretted that I could not again behold this beautiful lake to advantage, but I felt doubly sorry for a few of my fellow passengers in the steamboat, who, with the exception of the pleasure of knowing that they were upon a Scottish lake, might as well have been upon a duck-pond, in the neighbourhood of London, where they might have seen a fog in equal perfection.

On reaching the other end of the lake, the mist partially cleared, and permitted a ray of sunshine to fall upon "Ellen's Isle," and to give us a glimpse of the lower portions of Ben Ledi and Ben An, as we proceeded through the beautiful Trosachs.

On arriving at the Trosachs inn, in a tolerably

of patronage earlier in the season, it was unoccupied by strangers to-night. I found my night's quarters clean and comfortable, both as regarded the sleeping and culinary department.

I rose betimes and after a good breakfast was again ready for departure, which I was induced to defer, owing to the arrival of the Glencoe and Glenorchy coach, which brought a little horde of tourists prepared to breakfast on the opposite side of the ferry.

This ferry presents something of the rapidity of stream observable at Coran, and it was by no means a straight passage which the embarked tourists performed to their breakfast. In about twenty minutes after their arrival on the opposite side, I witnessed the departure of the well-loaded coach, and I stepped into the boat in the course of half-an-hour. The tide was now high and the strong current had subsided. In the absence of the ferryman I was pulled across by the waiter, who informed me that he had never undertaken the exploit before, and considering the length of the huge unwieldy oars, he performed the business remarkably well without assistance, which I was ready to offer, but which the passage being little more than a hundred yards, he dispensed with. Had the tide been still running heavily, I should have insisted upon taking one oar. I landed in safety on the opposite shore, and watched the return of the novice.

Before proceeding further, I cannot refrain from mentioning a circumstance which occurred to me twelve years ago, while staying at the hotel on the south side of the ferry. In the year 1842, having made a short tour through the lake

district of England, with a Cambridge friend, we determined to extend our wanderings over a portion of Scotland, and after having visited the Islands of Mull, Staffa, and Iona, arrived on the day following at Ballachulish, by the steamer from Oban. After taking tea at the inn, we were informed by the landlord, who was then single, (but now long since deceased, leaving a widow who conducts the house), that we should be repaid for a short walk of two or three miles, by witnessing the games and festivities, enacted by the light of a bonfire, enjoyed by the neighbouring peasantry at the invitation of a gentleman who wished to celebrate the birth of a son and heir. My friend being somewhat indisposed declined accompanying me, but a medical man whom we met at the inn offered to join me. We started in the twilight of a beautiful summer's evening, pursuing our road along the south side of Loch Leven in the direction of Glencoe, being informed by the landlord that at the distance of two miles we should come to a path striking off to the right, which would lead us directly to the festive scene.

We walked on for more than the distance prescribed without perceiving the promised path, and both the doctor and myself began to weary of what we considered the prosecution of a fool's errand. In a few minutes I observed to my companion that we should soon learn the road from three women, who were approaching, and whose dress and appearance led me to conclude were returning from the place we were seeking.

"What women!" was the doctor's exclamation; "I see none."

I was astonished at this, and almost fancied

my companion had become suddenly blind, especially when he positively declared that no person was approaching us, while the three women were now as I imagined, within a few yards of us. I almost lost my temper, while at the same time, I inquired of the females the road we were seeking, and I was by no means better pleased on receiving no reply from the women, who, instead of answering my question, commenced dancing backwards, in which fantastic proceeding I followed them, determined to get some kind of answer. Having stepped over a low railing, I still pursued the fleeting nymphs, who continued to distance me until I reached the white wall of a small chapel, on the loch side, at a distance of about fifty yards from the doctor, who laughed heartily at my disappointment, while I stood for a few moments viewing the wall into which they seemed to flatten themselves, and disappear much after the fashion of a harlequin in a pantomime.

These women appeared to be of the same height and proportions, both of which were those of large women, their costume consisted of straw bonnets, trimmed with plain white ribbons, their shawls were white with dark borders, their dresses were dark. I am by no means superstitious or imaginative, and I generally account for the visions of other persons by supposing that those to whom they appear are either intoxicated, or that they have conjured up some apparition in their own minds.

I have traversed the most sequestered districts, the most lonely roads and lanes, many of which in Yorkshire, as well as others in Scotland and elsewhere, were declared to be haunted by head-

less women and supernatural and brutal male spirits; and although I have ridden and walked such roads at all hours of the night, to say nothing of visiting church yards by moonlight, I never before this time or since fancied the appearance of any being, except that of some bodily form that might present itself. I leave it to the more learned in the study of optics to determine the cause of my seeing distinctly on this occasion three women, undiscerned by my companion.

I believe that the vision is to be accounted for, solely by the law of reflection, in which opinion I am supported by the appearance of those women exactly resembling each other in stature and dress; which would seem to argue the triple representation of one woman who was in all probability performing the backward dancing at a considerable distance, but which was reflected to my sight, while the eye of my friend having a different focus perceived it not. I could discern no features whatever beneath the bonnets of these imaginary ladies.

After this digression, I shall proceed to my tour homewards, which will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

Departure from Ballachulish—Slate Quarries—Pass of Glencoe—The King's House Inn—Coach again—More Tourists—The Black Mount—Loch Lydoch—Loch Rannoch—Marquis of Breadalbane's Deer Forest—Inverouran—Loch Tulla—Glenorchy—Tyndrum—The King's Field—St. Fillan's Church and Pool—Crianlarich—Inveraman—Loch Lomond—Inversnaid—Loch Katrine—Ellen's Isle—Ben Ledi—Ben An—Trosachs Inn—Horse Hire in Perthshire—Tolls—Mrs. Ferguson's Inn—Arrival at Callander—Bank—Free Church—Falls of Bracklinn—Loch Achray—Loch Venachar—Loch Lubnaig—The River Teith—Pike—Perth—St. Andrew's—Aberdeen—Lake Menteith—Inchmachome, or the "Isle of Rest"—Talla, or the "Earl's Isle"—Priory—Tomb of the second Earl of Menteith and Countess—Queen Mary's Bower.

HAVING crossed the ferry, and arrived on the south bank, where I left the reader at the commencement of my story, I proceeded along the side of Loch Leven for a distance of two miles, when I reached the celebrated slate quarries, which, while they give employment to a number of people, are decidedly eye sores in this lovely scene. I could not help being struck with the pale and puny appearance of the numerous offspring of the quarrymen, as I passed through this long line of cottages and works, which seemed almost interminable. I was glad to hurry through this place, which brought to my mind the miserable and wretched scenes of trade, and in Yorkshire accompanying vice and profligacy. Proceeded elsewhere about a mile, I left this congregation of slate men, puny bairns, and sickly looking wives,

and once more breathed the pure and untainted air of the Highlands. After pursuing my course for two or three miles, I entered the magnificent "Pass of Glencoe," which has been too frequently described and extolled to need any remark from myself, while, at the same time, I must say that its wild and lonely magnificence of scenery surpasses the descriptions I have seen, and can only be appreciated by a visit, which is easily made now-a-days, by the tourist.

From one end to the other of this wild and savage glen, but one solitary farm house is to be seen. The sides of this pass are grand in the extreme, being composed of steep rocks and precipices, which rise to an immense height, while the Cona, which issues from a small lake in the glen, pours its crystal waters over a rocky bed at their base.

At a considerable height, is discerned the Cave of Ossian, which appears like a narrow window, or niche. On issuing from the pass, a wild and barren tract of moorland presents itself, while an endless number of mountains arise on all sides. After pursuing this road for about three miles further, I arrived at the solitary Inn called the King's House, the situation of which, is bleak and desolate in the extreme.

The distance I had walked to-day from Ballachulish is sixteen miles, the road through Glencoe being somewhat steep and fatiguing. I slept here to-night, and found the accommodation very clean and comfortable, and was supplied, at tea, with some of the largest and finest flavour's herrings I ever tasted. ate to

Before I was up, next morning, I heard clattering of plates and tea cups in the by the

room adjoining my bed room, which was accompanied with a constant ringing of the bell, and orders for more eggs, herrings, and other ingredients of breakfast. The Glencoe and Glenorchy coach had arrived, and, owing to the smallness of the rooms in this very old house, breakfast was prepared up stairs and down stairs, not excepting my sitting room.

It was about one o'clock when I took my departure from the King's House, determined to reach Tyndrum to-night.

At a quarter of a mile from the inn, I commenced a long and steep ascent, over what is called the Black Mount. At this point, besides Loch Lydoch, an immense number of small lakes lie stretched over the dreary moorland in the direction of Loch Rannoch. I believe there is very fair trout fishing in these lakes earlier in the season, but the fish are generally small. At a distance of three miles from the King's House, I halted for an hour by the road side, hoping to see something of the Highland chase, the Marquis of Breadalbane being out in his deer forest, which lies in the immediate neighbourhood. There was every probability of a herd of deer making their way across the dreary moorland I was now traversing; but, hearing a shot or two, which were followed by another giving a fainter report, I concluded (which I afterwards found to be the case), that the noble game had taken a contrary direction.

the mile day was wearing, and I had yet sixteen in Yorou o walk, so I proceeded steadily over elsewhent oorland until I reached Inverouran, a

n,

distance of nine miles and a half from the King's House.

The situation of Inverouran is very beautiful, standing close to Loch Tulla, in the immediate vicinity of which, some fine wood enlivens the landscape, forming a pleasing change after the road I had traversed.

At the distance of a mile, before I reached Inverouran, I was much pleased with the Forester's House, which is built and supplied with every convenience for the Marquis, who stays here occasionally when hunting in the neighbourhood. This house presents a truly sporting appearance; over the door, the antlers of a fine stag display themselves, while, in the hall within, hang a number of "sporrans," (bearing the crest of the Marquis), worn by his Highland foresters when attending the chase.

I staid for about ten minutes at Inverouran, which appears to be a clean and comfortable house on a small scale. For a short distance, the road continues beside Loch Tulla, and is beautifully wooded, but only for a few hundred yards, when it again traverses a wild moorland. The River Orchy, which flows on the left, is crossed by a bridge two miles distant from Inverouran, after which, it flows on the right of the road which continues through the picturesque, though wild and lonely valley of Glenorchy, seven miles to Tyndrum, which I reached at night, having traversed the last six miles in comparative darkness, rendered more disagreeable by an hour's heavy rain, which brought me in a moist state to my night's quarters.

I found the accommodation afforded by the

Tyndrum Inn very good. This house is kept by a widow, in the management of which she is assisted by her son, a civil and attentive person.

Tyndrum, situated at the head of Strathfillan, is rendered famous as being in proximity to what is called the King's Field, the scene of a severe engagement between Robert Bruce and the Lord of Lorn, by whom the king was repulsed, being, at length, compelled to leave his mantle and brooch in the hands of his opponents, after many proofs of strength and courage, which so invariably signalized the actions of the monarch.

At about ten o'clock next morning I started from Tyndrum, and pursued the road to Inverarnan. Two miles from Tyndrum is the church of St. Fillan, where there is a pool, in the river Ettrick, dedicated to the saint, in which, till recently, lunatics and other afflicted persons were frequently dipped, after which, being bound, they were laid for the night in the churchyard, where the infatuated beings expected to receive a cure.

During the last twelve years, only two or three persons have been sufficiently insane, or superstitious, to have resort to the supposed healing powers of this well.

After passing the inn of Crianlarich, two miles beyond St. Fillan's, the road lies for some distance over moorland, but becomes beautifully wooded and extremely picturesque for about two miles before reaching Inverarnan.

I reached Inverarnan late in the evening, and, after taking a sandwich, shortly retired to bed, having to make an early start in the morning.

Soon after four o'clock, I walked to the head of Loch Lomond, and took the steamer (which

started at five A. M.) as far as Inversnaid, from which I walked six miles to the Coal barn, on Loch Katrine; where, after waiting an hour and a-half for the small steamer plying upon the lake, I took my passage to its eastern extremity.

This was a most unfavourable day for the tourist; it was raining heavily when I reached Inversnaid, from which there is a long ascent, almost perpendicular, which all passengers by the coach running between this place and the Coal barn, are forced to walk, the coach being kept at the summit of the hill, up and down which it cannot proceed.

I should have availed myself of this conveyance, but, unfortunately, it did not start until the arrival of a later boat from Inverarnan.

It continued to rain heavily as I walked the six rugged miles to the Coal barn, on reaching which I found the sides of Loch Katrine veiled in a dense mist. I regretted that I could not again behold this beautiful lake to advantage, but I felt doubly sorry for a few of my fellow passengers in the steamboat, who, with the exception of the pleasure of knowing that they were upon a Scottish lake, might as well have been upon a duck-pond, in the neighbourhood of London, where they might have seen a fog in equal perfection.

On reaching the other end of the lake, the mist partially cleared, and permitted a ray of sunshine to fall upon "Ellen's Isle," and to give us a glimpse of the lower portions of Ben Ledi and Ben An, as we proceeded through the beautiful Trosachs.

On arriving at the Trosachs inn, in a tolerably

humid state, I took a glass of Preston Pans beer and a biscuit, for which they had the modesty to charge me one shilling and three pence. The price of this refreshing beverage is in all shops three pence per bottle, an additional penny being sometimes added in hotels. I think, considering the fact, that I entered no room, but took my hurried refreshment in the hall, the charge of a shilling for a *hard* biscuit, was making a *hard* bargain for myself, and a tolerably good interest for the landlord. In reply to my remonstrances, I received the common answer, that it was the usual charge. Thanks to the number of tourists, who, with more money than wit, allow themselves to be thus imposed on.

The charge for a single horse here is eighteen pence per mile; in Sutherland the charge is never more than nine pence, and generally six pence, while the county is toll free: the turnpikes in Perthshire are a curse to the traveller. The distance from the Trosachs inn to Callander is ten miles, so had I hired, the charge would have been fifteen shillings, besides the driver. I care little about walking, seldom feeling fatigued; at the same time, being anxious to reach Callander early in the day, I was determined to avail myself of a conveyance, if I could obtain it upon moderate terms.

After leaving the Trosachs, at a distance of a mile and a half, I observed a sign-post, upon which a pointing hand directed the road, which I determined to take on reading the words—"To Mrs. Ferguson's inn." This inn lies at a distance of about fifty yards from the road side.

I here found *a small house*, and *a tremendous*

landlady, who is celebrated for her kindness and enormous strength. From all the accounts I have heard, this woman might vie with the cannon-lifting lady of Assynt. I asked her if I could obtain a conveyance of any kind; the reply to which question was an order to the ostler to prepare the Drosky, for which she told me she could make no charge (having no license), but that five shillings to the driver would cover every thing.

While the vehicle was preparing, the hospitable and portly landlady bid me approach a roaring fire to dry myself, offering me a dram of whiskey; and on hearing me admire some potatoes which were boiling, she immediately ordered the girl to give me a few in a plate together with a knife and fork; while in the twinkling of an eye a piece of excellent boiled mutton, together with the requirements from cruets were added. The Drosky was now at the door, and I took my seat beside the driver, whom I found a civil and obliging man, who spoke in the highest terms of his mistress. The horse was a perfect model for draught work, combining strength and pace with the hardy constitution represented by the colour of dark brown.

I reached Callander at two o'clock in the afternoon, and the driver having received five shillings, bid me adieu, perfectly satisfied. I deem it unnecessary to give a description of the lakes, and other objects of interest in the vicinity of Callander, one of the most picturesque situations in Scotland, all being so frequently visited, and so generally described in guide books.

I had not been at Callander for eleven years,

during which period it had advanced, to a certain extent, from a village to a little town. Many new houses have been built, a bank has been erected, a free Church has sprung up from the seeds of the disruption; while the railway has approached within a distance of sixteen miles at Stirling. A safe bridge has been erected over the Falls of Bracklinn, two lives having been lost on the occasion of a wedding party visiting the scene.

I passed the beautiful Loch Achray on my road to Callander, during my stay at which place, I walked to Loch Venachar and Loch Lubnaig, in order to visit waters which in bygone days had afforded me sport. Loch Lubnaig abounds with small trout, which rise readily to the fly in the early part of the season. This lake also contains salmon. Loch Venachar affords salmon and trout, and pike in abundance. The River Teith in which the salmon fishing is preserved, affords very tolerable trout angling in the early part of the season. This river also contains pike, although none I believe, are of very large dimensions. I killed a few in this water, thirteen years ago; the largest weighing about four pounds.

On one occasion, while fishing this river, I hooked a trout, of about half-a-pound, which was immediately seized by a small pike whose hold of the fish was so resolute that I had them both within a yard of my wading boots, when another pike, of larger dimensions, had the impudence to baulk me of my double capture, by carrying off the younger representative of his species, leaving to myself a mangled trout.

I will not impose too much upon the reader's

patience by detaining him with me at Callander for a month, at the expiration of which I proceeded to Perth, which after a short sojourn, I quitted for St. Andrews, finally taking up my temporary residence at Aberdeen where I have been chiefly indebted for amusement to the writing of my tour.

During my stay at Callander, I visited one place of interest that I had not seen before, which amply repaid me for my trouble. The Lake, or as it is frequently called the Port Menteith, is situate about six miles and a half from Callander. Upon this lake, which is about five miles in circumference, are two islands, the larger and more easterly being called "Inchmachome," or the "Isle of Rest," the other is termed "Talla," or the "Earl's Isle." On the first, comprising an extent of four or five acres, are the ruins of a Priory, erected early in the thirteenth century, in the choir of which is a tomb, much mutilated and defaced by time, in which are deposited the remains of the second Earl of Menteith and his Countess.

On this island are the remains of the Earl's garden, in which are several trees bearing apples, besides others producing an abundance of fine filberts. The chief object of interest on this isle, is Queen Mary's Bower, composed of box trees, of great height and thickness, which were planted by the hand of the ill-fated Queen of Scots, during the invasion of the English in 1547.

The Queen was conveyed to this island as a place of safety, prior to her departure for education on the Continent. I brought away a specimen of the box-wood, the trees being the largest

I had ever seen. I was delighted with the soft and wooded situation of this lake, and the interesting objects on the island fully repaid me for a walk of thirteen miles, and a passage of one upon the water which was extremely rough; especially for the first few hundred yards from the place of embarcation. By keeping near shore, we managed to get into calmer water under lee of the island. I did not visit the "Earl's Isle."

And now, reader, I must bid you farewell, begging again to offer the apologies, contained in the Preface, for the brevity of my tour, and the imperfect execution of the sketches; at the same time, should the pages you have perused, induce you to visit the scenes which I have attempted to describe, I trust no circumstances may occur to check your progress to places further north, which I intended visiting, and which, I believe, will amply repay the journey. As these pages will, in all probability, appear in print at a time when some of my readers may prepare for departure to "The Land of the Mountain and the Flood," I shall devote a short space, in fulfilment of my promise, to a consideration of the plaid, unquestionably the most useful upper garment the traveller can take with him to the Highlands.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Plaid—Advantages, disadvantages, and modes of Wearing considered.

NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous advertisements of the paletôt, the Chesterfield, the Athol, the lounging, the morning, or the over-coat, which are all very well in places of fashion, I cannot forbear saying a few words with regard to a more primitive garment, the plaid, which, from experience, I have found to be the most serviceable accompaniment to other articles of clothing, worn by the visitant to the Highlands.

I am not so prejudiced in favour of this useful article, as to be blind to its inconveniences; which I shall mention, as they have occurred to myself.

A plaid, to be really serviceable, should be composed wholly of wool, without any intermixture of cotton. It should not be over fine; neither should it be open and porous; but rather close in texture. Colour is a matter which I leave entirely to the fancy of the wearer; for my own part, I prefer a dark brown to any other shade, as being less apt to fade and turn shabby, than brighter hues, while it keeps clean far longer than the common shepherd tartan. Brown is also more invisible amongst rocks and heather, a great disideratum for the sportsman.

Plaids are manufactured of all sizes and degrees of thickness, some being so large and heavy as

to form sufficient bedding for the shooter, when sleeping on the hill side. While, however, these offer peculiar advantages by night, they are far too cumbrous for daily wear; and are generally conveyed on the back of a shooting pony, to the moors.

It is a great mistake, however, to run into the opposite extreme, by selecting a covering of such fine and thin texture, that while it may be very portable and convenient in a bright sunshine, becomes worse than useless in a drenching rain. My own plaid, which is a full sized one, composed entirely of Highland wool, weighs exactly four pounds; and from experience I would recommend one of the same kind, as being the best for general use. I purchased this excellent piece of stuff at Inverness for thirteen shillings and sixpence; this is a cheap one; of course, far more expensive articles may be procured, the extra price being occasioned by fineness of texture.

I shall now mention the few instances in which this useful article is less convenient than a great coat, or waterproof garment, made with sleeves. The first instance is, when riding on horseback, in which case a coat is decidedly more comfortable; the second is in fishing during a heavy rain, when the arms must be either unprotected, or to a certain extent deprived of free action.

The same objection attends the plaid in rowing, and all exercises requiring a free use of the arms. This inconvenience, however, is far more than counterbalanced by the numerous instances in which no other garment could answer the purpose.

I shall endeavour to illustrate what I have stated, by reciting a few instances in which I

have tested the usefulness of the subject of this chapter.

Several years ago, while fishing with a friend upon Loch Awe, we were overtaken by one of those sudden squalls to which Mountain Lakes are liable. We were at a considerable distance from shore; the waves were breaking over the side of our leaky boat, which two men, aware of our danger, were endeavouring to pull ashore as quickly as possible. Our crazy vessel was leaking fast, and my friend was engaged in baling her with a small tin pot.

The rowers continued to labour, but although the wind was in their favour, we doubted whether we could reach land ere a squall, which we espied, coming from an opposite quarter, might carry us again into the centre of the Lake. The thought suddenly struck me of turning my plaid to account; so, whipping it off my shoulders, I stood up in the boat, holding two of its extremities in my hands, while I secured its lower portion with my feet; and this ready-made sail so quickened our passage, that we reached the shore in safety a few seconds before the arrival of a breeze, which the boatmen said would have swamped us on the loch.

In the foregoing instance, the reader will see that no other garment than the plaid could have answered the purpose.

I have on many occasions found both sheets and blankets so damp, that I believe by sleeping in my plaid, I have been as much indebted to it as I was in the instance I have just mentioned.

When finding the supply of bedding too scanty, an excellent blanket is afforded by the plaid; for

which no other article of clothing can form a substitute.

In order fully to appreciate the merits of this simple Highland garment, let the reader revert to his "school-boy days," when in all probability, like myself, he heaped the various articles of his dress, upon his bed, on a cold wintry night; and experienced the discomfort attending a covering composed of a number of small articles; the plaid covers the whole bed, and lies smooth without falling off. Should a pillow be found too low, this useful article of clothing, readily forms a second to be placed beneath it.

Another, and most important advantage which the plaid has over all other wraps, is the quickness and facility with which it is dried. While other garments require a vast deal of turning and trouble, the plaid having no sleeves or lining, is soon thoroughly dried before the fire, or if very wet, being wrung out by doubling it over a stick and well twisted, is still better aired when suspended on a tree in a high wind. Having now mentioned the advantages and disadvantages of the plaid, I must in conclusion give a few hints as to the modes of wearing it.

When the plaid is not required to protect the wearer from storm or tempest, he may take his choice of the following modes:—

First—Throw it fourfold over the left shoulder, allowing it to hang nearly to the knee; pass the plaid under the right arm, across the chest, and again over the left shoulder. This is the most ordinary method of wearing the garment; it is not, however, the most convenient one, when a high wind is blowing behind the wearer; in

which case, as well as when riding, or engaged in any way requiring the free use of the arms, the following mode will be found more convenient.

Second—Fold the plaid in the same manner over the left shoulder, allowing it to hang a little below the waist, bring the other end under the right arm, but instead of proceeding as in the last instance, bring it round the body, passing it over the short end, under the left arm across the back, over the right shoulder, and under the fold previously passed over the chest. The plaid is thus crossed upon the back, while the two ends are tightly secured beneath the fold across the body in front. This forms the most compact method of wearing the plaid.

Thirdly—There is another way of using the plaid, perhaps less generally known than any other, which I shall endeavour to describe. I am supposing the reader to have a scarf plaid, *i. e.* one open at both ends—there are what are termed poke plaids, which have one extremity sewed up, to form a pocket.—These are frequently worn by shepherds and others for the convenience of carrying lambs, or other articles; they cannot, however, be applied to the purpose I am about to name, nor to many others for which the far more useful scarf is available. Open the plaid, and put it singly across the shoulders, permitting its extremities to hang down of equal length in front. Now tie the two uppermost corners in a tight knot, which throw over the head, leaving it close to the nape of the neck; bring the arms forward, and you will find yourself enveloped in a very comfortable cloak.

There is another way of using the plaid, which I will mention before concluding the chapter. This method, which, I learned in Sutherlandshire, is perhaps the best for protecting the shoulders and body in a heavy rain, which the angler can adopt. Open the plaid singly out, take one end and fold it down lengthwise to within half-a-yard or so of the other end; now put the plaid lengthwise over your shoulders, bringing the folded part well over your head, then passing a piece of string, or your pocket handkerchief, over the plaid, gather it closely round the neck, tying the cord under the chin. Thus a hood is formed, which on being thrown back forms a fourfold covering for the shoulders; while the lower part of the person is also well protected; by wearing the plaid in this manner, the arms are but little impeded in their action.

I shall now conclude a chapter upon a subject somewhat difficult of description, which has forced upon me, a repetition of the name of the garment, without which repetition it would be impossible to render my meaning intelligible; this I trust I have done. There are many other modes of wearing the plaid, and as many more instances in which it will be found serviceable: for the discovery of these I leave the subject in the hands of my readers.

THE END.

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